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COUSIN PONS

Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), French novelist, was born at Tours. "His works" says Chambers, "suffer more or less from unnatural chaos, diffuseness, and the want of a solid knowledge of the world, although there is a richness of description in portraying individual features of character, as drawn directly from the heart, not to be denied." "Cousin Pons" is a tale of modern Paris about 1844-6. It appeared in the Constitutionnel, March-May 1847, under the title "Les Deux Musiciens".

HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

"Balzac is perhaps the greatest name in the post-Revolutionary literature of France. His writings display a profound knowledge of the human heart, with extraordinary range of knowledge. . . . Balzac holds a more distinct and supreme place in French fiction than perhaps any English author does in the same field of art."—*Encyclopædia Britannica.*

"Balzac, though he paints human life, perhaps, too much in tints of fate that remind us of the Greek tragedians, is far deeper and more true to nature than George Sand or Rousseau. The teachings implied in his tales come home closer to the conscience and heart than do their essays and stories. There is in him more than Gallic blood. He is the greatest of novelists, unmatched in his guild or kind as a social philosopher, and unsurpassed in his literary style. As a romance-writer he has no peer as yet in the English tongue."—*Rev. Dr. C. A. Bartol.*

"Balzac exacts more attention than most novel readers are inclined to give; he is often repulsive, and not unfrequently dull; but the student who has once submitted to his charm becomes spell-bound. . . . There are some greater novelists than Balzac, but in this one quality of intense realization of actors and scenery he is unique."—"*Balzac's Novels,*" *by Leslie Stephen.*

"Unquestionably he ranks as one of the few great geniuses who appear by ones and twos in century after century of authorship, and who leave their mark ineffaceably on the literature of their age. And yet, among all the readers—a large class—who are from various causes unaccustomed to study French literature in its native language, there are probably very many who have never even heard of the name of Honoré de Balzac."—CHARLES DICKENS: *All the Year Round.*

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

COUSIN PONS

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL
NEW YORK: 9 LAFAYETTE PLACE
1886

BALZAC'S NOVELS IN ENGLISH.

1. PÈRE GORIOT.
2. THE DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS.
3. CÉSAR BIROTTEAU.
4. EUGÉNE GRANDET.
5. COUSIN PONS.

(Others to follow.)

DALZIEL BROTHERS, CAMDEN PRESS, LONDON, N.W.

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COUSIN PONS.

I.

A GLORIOUS RELIC OF THE EMPIRE.

Towards three o'clock of an afternoon in October, 1844, a man about sixty years old — though most persons would have thought him older — was passing along the Boulevard des Italiens, his nose to the scent as it were, his lips pharisaically pursed, like those of a merchant who has just concluded a profitable piece of business, or a young fellow satisfied with himself as he leaves a boudoir. In Paris that is the highest known expression of personal satisfaction in man.

As the old man approached within sight of the various persons who daily sit on chairs along the boulevard and enjoy the pleasure of analyzing the passers-by, a smile flickered across the faces of one and all, — a smile peculiar to the inhabitants of Paris; meaning many things, ironical, sarcastic, or compassionate, though it never dawns upon the face of a Parisian, blasé as he is with sights of every kind, unless drawn forth by some great and living curiosity. The clever saying of a certain actor may serve to explain both the archæological value of this worthy man, and the meaning of the smile which

ran like an echo from eye to eye along his way. Some one asked Hyacinthe, famous for his witticisms, what hatter he employed to make his hats, the mere sight of which convulsed an audience. "I don't have them made," he replied, "I keep them." And in like manner, among the million actors who form the great troop of Parisian life, we meet with certain unconscious Hyacinthes who carry on their persons all the absurdities of their period, and seem so completely the embodiment of an epoch that we are seized with convulsive laughter, though perhaps at the very moment we are consumed with grief for the treachery of some ex-friend.

Preserving, as he did with uncompromising fidelity, certain details of dress belonging to the fashions of the year 1806, this particular passer-by recalled to mind the Empire, without being altogether a caricature of it. To an observer, a discrimination of this kind renders such evocations of the past extremely valuable, though this conjunction of trifling things requires the analytical attention with which connoisseurs in the art of lounging are gifted: to excite a general laugh the passer-by must present fantasticalities that are "as plain as a pike-staff," to use a common saying, such in fact as actors rely upon to insure the success of their entrance upon the stage. This withered, dried-up, thin old man wore a nut-colored spencer over a greenish coat with white metal buttons. A man wearing a spencer in 1844 is, we beg you to observe, as remarkable a sight as if Napoleon himself had deigned to be resuscitated for a couple of hours.

The spencer was invented, as its name indicates, by an English lord, vain, no doubt, of his handsome per-

son. Before the peace of Amiens, this Englishman thus solved the problem of covering his shoulders without burdening his whole body with the weight of that horrible box-coat, which in our day has fallen on the backs of hackney-coachmen. However, handsome figures being always in a minority, the spencer had only a passing success in France, despite the fact that it was an English invention. At sight of a spencer, the men of forty to fifty years of age clothed the wearer in their mind's eye with top-boots, kerseymere small-clothes of pistachio-green, and fancied themselves once more in the array of their youth. Old women recalled their early conquests. As to the young people, they merely asked why this elderly Alcibiades had cut off the tails of his coat. Everything about him was so thoroughly in keeping with the spencer that no one could have hesitated to ticket him *homme-Empire*, just as we call our chairs and consoles *meubles-Empire;* though he symbolized the Empire only in the eyes of those to whom that magnificent and gorgeous epoch was known, at least *de visu*, for a certain fidelity of memory as to past fashions was needful to its perception. The Empire has already receded so far that it is not every one who can picture to himself its Gallo-grecian reality.

The hat worn at the back of the head exposed the whole forehead with a sort of bravado, by which civilians and government officials were just then endeavoring to assert themselves against military assumption. It was a horrible fourteen-franc silk hat, under whose brim a pair of large thick ears had left whitish traces that no brushing had been able to efface. The silk tissue, badly stretched as it always is over the stiff frame, was

crumpled in several places, and looked as if it had the leprosy in spite of the hand which smoothed it daily.

Beneath the hat, which seemed in danger of falling off, expanded one of those ludicrously droll faces such as the Chinese alone had the wit to invent for their grotesque porcelain images. This huge face, perforated like a colander till the holes actually produced shadows, and furrowed with lines like a Roman mask, defied all the laws of anatomy. The eye found no framework to rest upon. Where construction required bones, the flesh showed only gelatinous levels; where ordinary features exhibit hollows, flabby knobs and protuberances appeared. This grotesque face, crushed together into the shape of a pumpkin, and made forlorn by two gray eyes surmounted by a red rim in place of eyelashes, was overtopped by a nose like that of Don Quixote, — just as a plain is commanded by a solitary rock. Such a nose expresses, as Cervantes must have observed, that innate tendency for self-devotion to great things which degenerates into credulity. The ugliness of this face, comical as it was, excited no laughter. The extreme melancholy revealed in the pale eyes of the poor man struck the minds of scoffers and froze the light jest upon their lips. The thought came that here was one to whom Nature had denied the power of expressing tenderness, except at the cost of being ridiculous or revolting to a woman. Frenchmen are dumb before a misfortune such as this; to them the worst of all misfortunes is the denial of the power to please.

This man, thus disfigured by Nature, was dressed like the paupers of good society, — a condition sometimes emulated by the rich. He wore shoes hidden by gaiters

made after the fashion of those of the *garde impériale* which enabled him, no doubt, to wear the shoes a long time. The black cloth of his trousers had a rusty tinge, and the creases had grown shiny and showed white lines, which, together with the old-fashioned cut, revealed the age of the garment. The amplitude of this nether casing scarcely concealed a leanness derived more from the man's constitution than from any Pythagorean régime; for the worthy soul, endowed by Nature with a sensual mouth and thick lips, showed when he smiled a set of white teeth worthy of a shark. The double-breasted waistcoat, crossed like a shawl and also of black cloth, with a white vest under it, beneath which still further appeared the scarlet edge of a knitted doublet, carried you back in memory to the days of the five waistcoats of Garat. An enormous white muslin cravat, whose portentous tie had been invented by a famous Beau to charm the "charming women" of 1809, covered so much of his chin that his face seemed to plunge into it as into an abyss. A silken cord, braided to resemble hair, crossed the shirt and guarded the watch from the improbable grasp of a thief. The greenish coat, which was remarkably clean, testified to a fashion at least three years older than that of the trousers; but the black velvet collar and the white metal buttons were recent restorations, and showed domestic care brought down to minute particulars.

The habit of tilting the hat on the crown of the head, the triple waistcoat, the immense cravat in which the chin was buried, the gaiters, the metal buttons on the greenish coat, all these signs of imperial fashions harmonized with a lingering air of Incroyable affectations;

while something indescribably skimped in the folds, something precise and meagre in the general effect, savored of David's studio, and recalled the spindling furniture of Jacob. It was easy to recognize at the first glance either a man of good breeding now the prey of some secret vice, or one of a class of small incomes whose expenses are so sharply limited by the narrowness of their means that a broken pane of glass, a torn garment, or the philanthropic nuisance of a charity suffices to put an end to their personal enjoyments for a month. Had you been there and seen him pass, you would have asked yourself why a smile flickered on that grotesque face, whose habitual expression must have been sad and cold, like that of one struggling in obscurity to obtain the trivial necessaries of life. But if you also noticed the maternal care with which the strange old man held something unmistakably precious beneath the two left flaps of his double coat, as if to protect it from accidental shocks; and more especially if you observed in his manner the busy air which idle people assume when they are charged with some commission, — you might have guessed that he had found the equivalent of a countess's lap-dog, and was carrying it triumphantly, with the assiduous gallantry of an *homme-Empire*, to the charming woman of sixty who had not yet been able to renounce the daily visit of her satellite. Paris is the only city in the world where you will meet such sights, — sights which make the boulevards a perpetual drama played gratis by Frenchmen for the benefit of Art.

II.

THE END OF A GRAND PRIX DE ROME.

JUDGING by the general structure of this bony being, and in spite of his audacious spencer, you would hardly have classed him among Parisian artists, — a clique whose privilege, like that of the Gamin de Paris, is to rouse the bourgeois imagination into jovial mirth ever since the good old word *drolatique* has been restored to honor. The man was, however, a *grand prix*,[1] — the composer of a prize cantata, crowned at the Institute about the time that the Academy of Rome was re-established; in short, he was Monsieur Sylvain Pons, author of many well-known songs warbled by our mothers; also of two or three operas performed in 1815 and 1816, and of other unpublished scores. The worthy man was now ending his career as leader of an orchestra in a boulevard theatre; and he was also — thanks to his appearance — music-teacher in several schools for young ladies. He had no means beyond his salary and the pay for his private lessons. What a fate! To be giving private lessons at his time of life! How many mysteries behind this matter-of-fact and unromantic situation!

[1] The École des Beaux-Arts gives as the chief prize in its several departments three years' study at its Academy in Rome, now established in the Villa Medici. The winner of this benefit is called familiarly a "grand prix," or "grand prix de Rome."

This last of the spencer-wearers, if we may so designate him, carried upon his person something other than the symbols of the Empire; he bore, written upon those three waistcoats, a significant lesson. He exhibited gratis one of the many victims of that baneful and disastrous system called *Concours*, — a system of competition in educational institutions which has ruled in France for over a hundred years without beneficial results. This hot-bed for intellect was invented by Poisson de Marigny, brother of Madame de Pompadour, who was appointed director of the Beaux-Arts in 1726. We can count upon our fingers the men of genius which these laureates of the Academy have supplied to us during the last century. In the first place, no administrative or scholastic nurturing will take the place of the miraculous opportune chances to which the world owes its great men. Among all the mysteries of generation this is the most inaccessible to our ambitious modern analysis. What should we think of the Egyptians, who they say invented ovens to hatch chickens, if they had not immediately given food to the brood? And yet that is what France neglects to do when she tries to produce artists by the forcing-pit of competition. As soon as she has obtained a sculptor, a painter, an engraver, a musician, by this mechanical contrivance, she troubles herself no more about him than a dandy troubles himself about the faded flowers in his button-hole. Thus it happens that the true man of talent is Greuze or Watteau, Félicien David or Pagnest, Géricault or Decamps, Auber or David d'Angers, Eugène Delacroix or Meissonnier, — all men who cared little for the great prizes, and who

came up in the open ground under the rays of that invisible sun called Vocation.

Sylvain Pons, sent to Rome by the State to become a great musician, brought back a taste for antiquity and for the choice things of art. He had grown well versed in all those achievements and masterpieces of the hand and brain called of late, in popular parlance, *bric-à-brac.* This son of Euterpe returned to Paris in 1810 a rabid collector, — the owner of pictures, statuettes, carvings in wood and ivory, enamels, porcelains, etc., which in the course of his academical stay in Rome swallowed up the greater part of his paternal inheritance, nearly as much through costs of transportation as from the price of their acquisition. He also spent a little fortune derived from his mother in the same outlays during a journey which he made through Italy, after the official three years passed in Rome. He wished to visit Venice, Milan, Florence, Bologna, Naples, at his leisure ; to abide for a time in each city as a dreamer, a philosopher, and with the careless ease of an artist who trusts to his talents for a livelihood as the courtesan trusts to her beauty. Pons was happy throughout this splendid journey, — happy as a man of soul and delicacy could ever be whose personal ugliness forbade all "success with women" (to use the hallowed phrase of 1809), and who found the things of life lower than the ideal standard he had created for them in his own mind. He accepted this discord between the rhythm of his soul and actual realities, however, with his eyes open. The sentiment of the beautiful, kept ever pure and vivid in his heart, was no doubt the hidden essence of those artless melodies, delicate and full of grace, which made his musical reputation

from 1810 to 1814. All reputations based on vogue and fashion and the ephemeral fancies of Paris produce such men as Pons. There is no country in the world so exacting as France in great matters, or so disdainfully indulgent in little ones. If Pons — fated to be drowned erelong in floods of German harmony and Rossinian opera — was by the year 1824 only an agreeable musician, known for a few charming songs, we may fancy what he became in 1831; so that in 1844, the year in which the solitary drama of his humble life began, Sylvain Pons had attained the value, and no other, of an antediluvian quaver; even the music-shops ignored his existence, though he composed the scores for certain pieces at his own and other theatres for very moderate remuneration.

The worthy soul did willing justice to the famous composers of the present epoch, — a fine performance of their masterpieces made him weep; but his reverence never reached the point of fanaticism, as it did with the Kreislers of Hoffmann; he let no emotion appear upon the surface, enjoying all within himself like the hashish-eaters or the Theriakis. The gift of admiration, of comprehension, the one faculty by which a commonplace man becomes the brother of a great poet, is so rare in Paris, where all ideas are treated like the transient guests at an inn, that for this alone we ought to give Pons our respectful esteem. The fact of his own failure to achieve success may seem exaggerated; but in truth he honestly admitted his weakness on the score of harmony; he had neglected the study of counterpoint, and modern orchestration, grown utterly beyond his knowledge, became inscrutable to him at the very moment

when by fresh study he should have kept himself to the level of modern composers and become, not indeed a Rossini, but a Hérold. However, he found such lively compensation in the joys of a collector for his failure as to musical fame, that if he had been forced to choose between his treasures and the glory of Rossini, he would — can it be believed? — have decided in favor of his beloved bric-à-brac.

The old musician put into actual practice the maxim of Chenavard, that learned collector of precious engravings who averred that no one could truly enjoy a Ruysdael, a Hobbema, a Holbein, a Raphael, a Murillo, a Greuze, a Sebastian del Piombo, a Giorgione, an Albert Dürer, unless the picture cost him no more than fifty francs. Pons never allowed himself a purchase over the cost of a hundred francs; and if he paid fifty francs for anything, that thing must have had an actual value of three thousand. The finest object in the world had no existence, so far as he was concerned, if its price was three hundred francs. Rare indeed had been his bargains; but he possessed the three elements of a collector's success, — the legs of a deer, the time of an idler, and the patience of a Jew.

Such a purpose, pursued for forty years in Italy and in Paris, had borne fruit. After spending, since his return from Rome, about two thousand francs a year, Pons now concealed from every eye a collection of masterpieces of all kinds, which amounted in his catalogue to the astounding number of 1907. From 1811 to 1816, in course of his quests about Paris, he had found for ten francs things that would sell in the present day for ten or twelve hundred, — pictures culled from the forty and

one thousand paintings annually offered for sale in the auction-rooms of Paris; Sèvres porcelains, *pâte tendre*, bought from the Auvergnats, those satellites of the Black-Band, who were gradually bringing back in their hand-carts the treasures of France under the Pompadour. He had scraped together relics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, doing justice to the men of wit and genius of the French school, the great unrecognized, such as Lepautre, Lavallée-Poussin, and others who created Louis XV. art and the style Louis XVI., and whose works supply to-day the pretended originality of our modern artists, who may be seen bending over these treasures in the Cabinet des Éstampes, attempting to make the like, but attaining only to clever imitations. Pons owed many of his specimens to exchanges, — that source of ineffable happiness to collectors. The pleasure of buying curios is second only to the superior joy of bartering them. Pons was the first to collect snuff-boxes and miniatures; yet, for all this, he had no fame as a bric-à-bracologist, for he never haunted auction-rooms, and was seldom seen in the chief marts of that business; consequently, he was ignorant of the venal value of his treasures.

The late Du Sommerard, founder of the museum now at the Hôtel Cluny, endeavored at one time to establish relations with the old musician; but that prince of bric-à-brac died without ever penetrating behind the veil of Pons's collection, — the only one, as Du Sommerard was well aware, that could be compared to the famous cabinet of Sauvageot. There were certain similarities between Pons and Sauvageot. The latter, a musician without fortune like Pons, followed the same methods

and employed the same means, from the same love of art and the same hatred towards these illustrious rich people who collect treasures for the purpose of competing in the markets with the dealers. Like his rival, his antagonist, his competitor in the quest for these marvels of handicraft, these prodigies of workmanship, Pons nurtured in his heart an insatiable avarice, the love of a lover for a beautiful mistress; and a public sale in the halls of the Rue des Jeûneurs under the hammer of an auctioneer seemed to him a crime of leze-majesty-bric-à-brac. He kept his collection to enjoy it at all hours, for souls created to admire great works have the glorious faculty of the true lover: they find as much enjoyment to-day as they found yesterday; for them there is no satiety, and masterpieces happily are ever young. Thus the thing he was holding so paternally under the tails of his coat was undoubtedly some treasure-trove, carried off with an ardor, O amateurs! which you alone can truly know.

At the first outline of this biographical sketch, every one will cry out: "Why, in spite of his ugliness, he must be the happiest man on earth!" True enough: no ennui, no spleen, resists the soothing influence a hobby sheds upon the soul. You, who can drink no longer from that chalice called through all time the "cup of pleasure," take up the task of collecting something, no matter what (people have ere now collected handbills), and you will recover your ingots of joy in small change. A hobby, a mania, is pleasure transformed into the shape of an idea. Nevertheless, do not envy the worthy Pons; for if you do, your sentiment, like others of its kind, will rest on error.

This man of innate delicacy, whose soul lived by its unwearying admiration for the glories of human toil, — that noble struggle with the forces of Nature, — was the slave of a capital sin, albeit the one which God will punish least severely. Pons was a gourmand. His small means and his passion for bric-à-brac condemned him to an ascetic diet so abhorrent to his hankering appetite, that the old celibate early cut the Gordian knot by dining daily among his friends. Far more attention was paid to people of celebrity under the Empire than in our day, possibly because they were fewer in number and less political in their pretensions. Men were poets, musicians, writers, on such moderate expenditure of talent! Pons, who was looked upon in those days as a probable rival of Nicolo, Paër, Berton, and other composers of his time, received so many invitations that he was forced to enter them in a note-book, just as a lawyer is obliged to record his cases. In his quality of artist he presented copies of his songs to his various hosts, played what was called the "forté" in their salons, gave them boxes at the Feydeau (the theatre to which he belonged), organized their concerts, and even played the violin and improvised little dances at the houses of his rich relations. Those were the days when the handsomest men in France were fighting duels with the handsomest men of the Allied Powers; consequently, and in accordance with the great law promulgated by Molière in the famous couplet of Éliante, Pons's remarkable ugliness was considered "originality." When he had done some service to a beautiful woman, he heard her call him a charming man; but his experience of happiness never went beyond the hearing of the words.

During this period, which lasted about six years (from 1810 to 1816), Pons contracted the fatal habit of dining well, of seeing those with whom he dined living extravagantly, procuring delicacies, producing their best wines, solicitous about the dessert, the coffee, the liqueurs, and giving him of their best, after the lavish fashion of the Empire, when many houses imitated the splendor of the various kings and queens and princes with which Paris then abounded. People played at royalty, just as in these days they play at parliament and create crowds of "Societies," each with its president, vice-president, and secretary, — "Societies" for the linen-trade and the silk-trade and the wine-trade; Agricultural Societies, Industrial Societies, etc. We have even got so far as to seek out social diseases, that we may set up societies of healers and reformers.

A stomach constructed by education, like that of Pons, reacts of course upon the moral constitution, and corrupts it through the high culinary knowledge thus acquired. Sensuality lurking in every fold of the heart speaks with sovereign voice, subverts the will, shatters the sense of honor, and demands its gratification at any price. No one has ever yet depicted the exactions of the human Maw; they escape literary criticism through sheer necessity of living. Who knows the number of those who are ruined by the table? In this respect, the table in Paris rivals the courtesan; it is, moreover, the fuel of which she is the waste. When Pons, falling from reputation as an artist, fell also from the condition of honored guest to that of a poor relation sponging for a dinner on his prosperous friends, he was unable to resign their well-served tables for the Spartan broth of a

forty-sous restaurant. Alas! he shuddered as he thought that his self-respect demanded so great a sacrifice; he knew himself capable of the utmost meanness that he might still live well, enjoy all the luxuries of the season, and (vulgar, but expressive word!) "gobble down" delicious little made dishes. Like a marauding bird, flying away with a full crop and warbling a tune by way of thanks, Pons had come to feel a certain pleasure in thus living at the cost of society, which asked in return — what? mere bowing and scraping. Accustomed, like all bachelors who hate their own homes and live chiefly in other people's houses, to the formulas and grimaces which are made to take the place of real sentiments in the social world, he used compliments as he did small change; and in respect to persons he was satisfied to take them at their current value, without poking his nose inquisitively behind the scenes.

This not intolerable state of things lasted ten years. But what years! they were like a rainy autumn. During all that time Pons kept his gratuitous place at table, and made himself useful in the houses where he dined. He set foot in the fatal path of doing a multiplicity of errands, and supplying, again and again, the place of porters and servants. Often employed to make purchases, he became an honorable and innocent spy sent by one family into another; yet no one ever blamed him for these incursions, or reproached him for their sneaking meanness. "Pons is a good fellow, who does n't know what to do with his time," they all said; "he is delighted to trot about for us — what else can he do?"

Soon the chill of old age began to creep about him, that keen north wind which penetrates and lowers the

moral temperature — above all, if age is poor and ugly. Then indeed the old man is trebly old. The winter of his life has come, — the winter of wan cheeks, and reddened nose, and numbness of all kinds.

From 1836 to 1843 Pons was seldom invited as a guest. Far from seeking their parasite, each family endured him as they endured their taxes ; they paid no heed to him, nor to the real services which he did for them. The families among whom he revolved, all of them without any respect for art, worshipped material results and valued none but those which they had gained since 1830, — that is to say, large fortunes or eminent social rank. Now Pons, being without sufficient dignity of mind or manners to inspire the awe which talent or genius imposes on the bourgeois soul, had ended, naturally, by becoming less than a cipher, without at the same time being altogether despised. Though he suffered in this world of cruel suffering like all timid beings, he bore his troubles silently. He had learned by degrees to repress his feelings, and make his heart a sanctuary, into whose solitude he withdrew, — a phenomenon which superficial persons often explain by the word "selfishness." The likeness between the solitary soul and the egotist is near enough to seem to justify such cavillers in their judgment of true hearts, — more especially in Paris, where no one carefully observes ; where events are rapid as the dash of waters, and all things go and come like an administration.

Thus it happened that Pons was found guilty under an indictment of selfishness drawn retrospectively against him ; for the world always ends by condemning those whom it accuses. Do any of us realize how

unmerited discredit crushes a timid nature? Who will ever truly picture the sorrows of timidity? Such a situation, aggravated more and more and from day to day, explains the sadness stamped upon the face of this poor musician, whose life was a long succession of servile surrenders. But such abject meanness, which all passions compel, is a bond in itself, — the more a passion exacts, the more it binds us; and these sacrifices are turned by the force of passion into a negative ideal treasure, in which men see an actual wealth. After enduring the insolent patronizing glance of some rich bourgeois, — rich in dulness, — Pons sipped his glass of port-wine and ate his quail *au gratin* as if they were a compensating vengeance, saying to himself, "They don't cost me too much."

To the eye of a moralist certain extenuating circumstances appear in such a life. A man exists only through some species of satisfaction. A being without passion, the just man made perfect, is a monster, a half-fledged angel: angels in the Catholic mythology have nothing but heads. Here below the perfect man is the wearisome Grandison, who finds even the Venus of the slums without a sex. Barring a few commonplace adventures during his Italian journey, where the climate may have given him a brief success, Pons had never won a woman's smile. Many men have had this luckless destiny. Pons was born out of time. His parents begot him in their old age, and he bore the stigmata of an unseasonable birth in the cadaverous tints of his skin, which looked as if they might have been contracted in one of those jars of spirits-of-wine where abnormal fœtuses are usually preserved. This

artist-soul, endowed with tenderness, dreamy, delicate, and yet forced to accept the character imposed upon him by his outward man, despaired of ever being loved. Celibacy was with him less a choice than a necessity. Gastronomy, the seducer of virtuous monks, opened its arms to him; he rushed into them as he had rushed into the worship of works of art and the religion of music. Good living and bric-à-brac were to him the small change for a woman; not music, for that was his profession, and we may look far before we find a man who is fond of the trade by which he lives. In the long run a profession is like marriage, we come to feel only its annoyances.

Brillat-Savarin defended the science of good eating from conviction; but perhaps he has not sufficiently insisted on the real pleasure a man finds at table. Digestion, which sets to work the forces of the human body, produces within the epicure an inward tumult equivalent to the highest enjoyments of love. Such a vast development of vital energy is felt, that the brain annuls itself in the interests of the secondary brain which exists in the diaphragm, and intoxication ensues from the very inertia of all the faculties. The boa-constrictors gorged with buffalo are found so drunk that they will let themselves be killed. Is there a man over forty who dares to go to work after dinner? And for this reason all great men are sober. Convalescents recovering from serious illness, to whom nourishment is carefully doled out, have often observed a species of gastric inebriation produced by a single chicken-wing. The virtuous Pons, whose enjoyments were concentrated in the mechanism of his stomach, was often in the condition

of such convalescents: he exacted from good living all the sensations it was capable of bestowing; and so far he had obtained them daily. No one dares bid farewell to a fixed habit. Many a suicide has stopped short on the threshold of death, as he remembered the café where he played his nightly game of dominos.

III.

THE TWO NUT-CRACKERS.

In 1835 mere chance avenged Pons for the indifference of the fair sex, and gave him what is familiarly called a staff of old age. The old man, old from his birth, found in friendship his prop of life; he contracted the only marriage society allowed him to make; he espoused a man, an old man, — a musician, like himself. Were it not for La Fontaine's divine fable, this sketch might have been called "The Two Friends;" but to take that name now would surely be a literary outrage, — a profanation, before which all true writers must recoil. That masterpiece of our fable-maker, at once the history of his dreams and the disclosure of his own soul, has an eternal right of conquest to its title. The page on which the poet wrote those words, "The Two Friends," is sacred property, — a temple, which each generation enters respectfully; where the world will come to pay its homage so long as the art of printing endures.

The friend of Sylvain Pons was a music-teacher, whose life and whose inclinations sympathized so well with his own that he said he knew him too late for happiness: their acquaintance, begun at the distribution of prizes in a private school, dated only from 1834. Perhaps no two souls ever so resembled each other

in that ocean of human life which took its rise, against the will of God, in this terrestrial paradise. The two musicians became in a short time a necessity for one another. In a week they were brothers; and at last Schmucke no more realized the existence of a Pons than Pons was aware of the existence of a Schmucke. This alone suffices to depict these worthy souls; but as all minds do not equally enjoy the brevity of synthesis, a slight elucidation becomes necessary for the benefit of the incredulous.

This pianist, like all pianists, was a German, — German, like the great Liszt and the great Mendelssohn; German like Steibelt, Mozart, and Dusseck; German like Döhler and Thalberg, Dreyschok and Hiller; like Leopold Meyer, like Crammer; like Zimmermann, Kalkbrenner, Herz, Woëtz, Karr, Edouard Wolff, Pixis, Clara Wieck, — in short, all Germans. Though a natural composer, Schmucke could only point the way and instruct others, so lacking was he in that native audacity which is necessary to the man of genius who seeks to manifest himself by music. The simple naïveté of many Germans does not last into middle-life; it stops short; what remains to them after a certain age is taken, as one takes the water of a canal, from the springs of their youth; and they use it to fertilize and foster their success in various ways — in science, in art, in fortune — by the power it gives them to escape distrust. In France, subtle people sometimes substitute for such Teutonic innocence the stolidity of the Parisian grocer. But Schmucke had kept his childlike simplicity, just as Pons carried on his person, unawares, the relics of the Empire. This genuine and noble German was, as it

were, both play and audience; he made his music for his own soul. He lived in Paris twenty years as a nightingale lives in its forest, alone of its species, singing in solitude, until the moment when, meeting Pons, he met his other self. (See "Une Fille d'Ève.")

Pons and Schmucke had each, one as much as the other, in his heart and in his character, those childlike sentimentalities which distinguish all Germans, — such, for instance, as a passion for flowers, and the worship of all natural effects, whereby they are led to plant a tangle of shrubs and vines in their gardens, to see in miniature the landscape which extends before their eyes; or that strong inclination for discovery which carries a German savant three hundred miles in his gaiters, to find a fact which stares him in the face as he sits at the edge of his well under the jessamine in his courtyard; or, in short, that innate impulse to attribute psychical significance to the trifles of creation which inspired the inexplicable works of Jean Paul Richter, the printed inebriations of Hoffmann, and the fortifications of folio which Germany throws up around the simplest question, into which they burrow till it becomes an abyss, at the bottom of which there is nothing to be seen but one German. Both were Catholics; together they went to Mass, and fulfilled their religious duties like children who never had anything to reveal to their confessors. They believed firmly that music, the language of heaven, was to ideas and sentiments what ideas and sentiments are to speech; they conversed *ad infinitum* on this theory, answering one another by orgies of music, demonstrating to themselves their own convictions, after the fashion of all lovers.

Schmucke was as absent-minded as Pons was intent. If Pons was a collector, Schmucke was a dreamer; one studied noble moral truths, the other saved and garnered noble material objects. Pons saw and bought a porcelain cup, while Schmucke was blowing his nose and thinking over some theme of Rossini or Bellini or Beethoven or Mozart, and hunting through the regions of sentiment to discover the origin or the echo of that musical phrase. Schmucke, whose savings were at the mercy of his absent-mindedness, and Pons, prodigal on his passion for bric-à-brac, arrived at the same result on the Saint-Sylvester of every year, — an empty purse.

Without this friendship, Pons might have died of his griefs; but as soon as he found a heart on which to unburden his own, life became bearable to him. The first time he poured his troubles into Schmucke's ear, the worthy German advised him to live as he did — on bread and cheese in his own home — rather than eat the dinners for which he was made to pay so dear. Alas! Pons dared not confess to Schmucke that within him heart and stomach were enemies; that the stomach demanded what the heart feared; and that it must at any cost have a good dinner to relish, just as a man of gallantry requires a mistress — to provoke. In course of time Schmucke, who was too much of a German to have the rapid observation which Frenchmen enjoy, came to understand Pons, and he loved the poor soul only the better for his weakness. Nothing strengthens friendship more than for one friend to feel himself superior to the other. An angel would have found nothing to say against Schmucke if he had seen him rubbing his hands when he first discovered the strong grasp which the love

of good eating had laid upon his friend. Indeed, the next day he added dainties to their breakfast, which he bought himself; and he took pains to have daily some rarity for his friend at breakfast, — a meal which since their intimacy they took together in their own home.

It would argue little knowledge of Paris to suppose for a moment that the two friends escaped Parisian ridicule, which respects nothing. Schmucke and Pons, when they married their wealth and their poverty, were seized with the thrifty idea of lodging together. Accordingly they shared the rent of an appartement, otherwise very unequally divided, in a quiet house in the quiet rue de Normandie, in the Marais. As they often left home in company, they were frequently to be seen walking side by side along the same boulevards, and the idlers of the neighborhood had christened them "the two Nut-crackers." This nickname relieves us from the necessity of giving a portrait of Schmucke, who was to Pons what the nurse of Niobe, the famous statue of the Vatican, is to the Venus of the Tribune.

Madame Cibot, concierge of the house, was the pivot on which the domestic arrangements of the two Nut-crackers turned; but she plays so important a part in the drama of their double lives, that it is best to withhold her portrait until the moment of her entrance on the scene.

What now remains to tell of the moral constitution of these two beings is precisely that which is most difficult to get into the comprehension of nine hundred and ninety-nine of the readers in this forty-seventh year of the nineteenth century, — probably because of the prodigious financial development which has followed the

establishment of railroads. What we have to say may be little, yet it is much; it is, in fact, to give some idea of the extreme delicacy of these two hearts. Let us borrow a figure from the railways, if only in repayment of the loans they obtain from us. The trains as they flash along the rails grind into the iron imperceptible grains of sand. Insert one of those grains, invisible to the traveller, into his loins, and he endures the pain of that worst of maladies, the gravel. Men die of it. Well, that which to our society, rushing along its metallic way with the rapidity of a locomotive, is the invisible grain of sand of which it takes no notice,— that very grain, perpetually ground on all occasions into the fibre of these two beings, was to them the gravel of the heart. Full of exceeding tenderness for the troubles of others, each mourned over his own powerlessness; and in the matter of their own feelings both had the exquisite sensitiveness of a person recovering from illness. Neither old age nor the manifold sights of the Parisian drama had hardened these fresh, pure, childlike souls. The longer they went their way, the more vivid were their inward sufferings. Alas! it is ever thus with the chaste natures, the tranquil thinkers, the true poets, who have never themselves fallen into excesses.

Since the union of the two old men, their occupations, which were much alike, had assumed a fraternal sort of gait, such as may be observed in the horses of a Parisian hackney-coach. Getting up, summer and winter, at seven in the morning, they went out after breakfast to give lessons in their several schools, where on occasion each supplied the other's place. Toward mid-day Pons went to his theatre, if there happened to be a

rehearsal; and all his leisure time he spent in strolling about. The two friends met again in the evening at the theatre, where Pons had secured employment for Schmucke, in this wise:

At the time when Pons first met Schmucke, he had just obtained, without seeking it, that marshal's staff of all unrecognized composers, the conductor's baton as leader of an orchestra. Thanks to Comte Popinot, — formerly Monsieur Anselme Popinot, married to Mademoiselle Césarine Birotteau, — now a minister of state, this place was secured to the poor musician when that bourgeois hero of the July revolution gave the management of the theatre to an old friend, — one of those friends for whom a mere parvenu blushes, when, as he rolls in his chariot, he encounters some companion of his youth, seedy and out-at-elbows, wrapped in a top-coat of doubtful tint, with his nose to the wind of such things as bring no grist to the mill. This friend, formerly a commercial traveller named Gaudissard, was at one time instrumental in the success of the great house of Popinot. Popinot, now a count and peer of France, having been twice a minister of state, never forgot or disowned the Illustrious Gaudissard. Far otherwise; for he was truly anxious to give the bagman an opportunity to replenish his wardrobe and refill his purse: neither politics nor the pomps and vanities of a citizen court had spoiled the heart of the former druggist. Gaudissard, always weak on women, asked for the lesseeship of a theatre which had lately failed; and the minister, in granting it, had taken care to send him a few old amateurs of the fair sex, rich enough to create a profitable stock-company in the interests of the ballet. Pons, a

parasite of the Hôtel Popinot, was a condition of this license. The Gaudissard company — which, be it said, eventually made its fortune — started in 1834 with the intention of realizing on the boulevard a grand idea, — an opera for the people. The music for the ballets and the fairy scenes required a good leader of the orchestra, and one who was something of a composer. The management to which the Gaudissard company succeeded had been so long on the point of failure that it employed no copyist. Pons got Schmucke into the theatre in that capacity, — an obscure occupation, which nevertheless requires serious musical knowledge. Schmucke, under Pons's advice, made some arrangement with the head of the business at the Opéra Comique, by which he avoided the mechanical part of it. The association of Pons and Schmucke had excellent results. Schmucke, who like all Germans was very strong in harmony, attended carefully to the instrumentation of the scores, for which Pons supplied the songs. When connoisseurs admired certain sparkling compositions which served as accompaniments to two or three popular plays, they accounted for them by the word *progress*, without inquiring as to their authors. Pons and Schmucke were eclipsed by their own glory, as some people have been drowned in their own bath-tubs. In Paris, especially since 1830, no one arrives at eminence without pushing, *quibuscumque viis*, and pushing masterfully, through an alarming crowd of competitors; for this a man needs strength in his loins; and the two friends had that gravel in their hearts which hinders all ambitious action.

Ordinarily, Pons entered the orchestra of his theatre at eight o'clock, the hour at which they give those

favorite pieces that require the tyranny of the leader's baton, both for the overture and for the accompaniments. This easy arrangement rules in most of the lesser theatres; but Pons was allowed even more freedom in this respect because of the great disinterestedness he showed in his relations with the management. Moreover, Schmucke supplied his place if necessary. After a time, Schmucke's position in the orchestra became a settled one. The Illustrious Gaudissard recognized, without saying a word about it, the value and usefulness of Pons's assistant. Pianos had lately been introduced into the orchestras of the leading theatres. That instrument, played gratis by Schmucke, was soon stationed close to the leader's desk, near which sat the volunteer supernumerary. As soon as the good German, who was without ambition or pretention, became known, all the musicians welcomed him heartily. The management soon after put Schmucke, at a moderate stipend, in charge of all those instruments that are not included in the orchestra of the boulevard theatres, but which, nevertheless, are often needed, — such as the piano, the tenor violin, the English horn, the violincello, the harp, the castanets for the cachucha, the bells, and all the Sax inventions, etc. Germans, though they may not know how to play the glorious instruments of Liberty, have a natural gift for playing all musical instruments.

The two old men, extremely beloved at the theatre, lived in its precincts like philosophers. They had drawn a film over their eyes so as not to see the inherent evils of a company in which the corps de ballet mingles with the actors and actresses, — one of the worst combinations

that the necessity of drawing houses has created for the torment of directors, authors, and musicians. Sincere respect for himself and others won general esteem for the good and modest Pons. In every sphere of existence a pure and limpid life, an honor and honesty above reproach, command a species of admiration from even the worst hearts. In Paris a noble virtue has the success of a large diamond, of a rare curiosity. Not an actor, nor an author, nor a dancer, however bold, would have played the smallest trick or permitted themselves the least jest against Pons or against his friend. Pons sometimes appeared in the green-room, but Schmucke knew naught but the subterranean passage which led from the orchestra to the outer wall of the theatre. Between the acts, when he was present at a representation, the good old German ventured to look about him at the audience, and he sometimes questioned the first flute — a young man born in Strasburg of a German family from Kehl — as to the eccentric individuals who usually garnish the regions of the proscenium. Little by little, the childlike imagination of the old man (whose social education was undertaken by the flute) admitted the fabulous existence of the Lorette, the possibility of marriage without formalities, the extravagancies of a leading actor, and the intrigues of the box-openers. The innocencies of vice seemed to the worthy man the last stroke of Babylonian iniquity, and he smiled as he would have done at Chinese arabesques. Knowing minds will readily understand that Pons and Schmucke were exploited and sponged upon, to use a phrase of the day; but what they lost in money they gained in consideration and good-will.

After the success of ballet which started the rapid fortune of the Gaudissard company, the directors presented Pons with a group in silver attributed to Benvenuto Cellini, the astounding price of which had been a topic of a conversation in the green-room. It was an affair of twelve hundred francs! The honest soul wished to return the gift. Gaudissard was at great pains to make him keep it.

"Ah! if we could only find actors of his stripe!" said the manager to his associate.

This double life, so calm apparently, was troubled solely by the vice to which Pons bowed the knee, — that fierce necessity which drove him daily to seek his uninvited dinner. Every time that Schmucke chanced to be at home when Pons was dressing, the good German bewailed the fatal habit.

"And subbose it make you fat!" he sometimes cried.

Schmucke brooded over schemes to cure his friend of his besetting weakness; for true friends are possessed, as to the moral order of things, with the perception of a dog's nose: they scent the griefs of friends, they guess the causes, and their minds dwell upon them.

Pons, who always wore upon the little finger of his right hand a diamond ring (tolerated under the Empire, but which was now considered ridiculous), — Pons, far too much of a troubadour at heart, and too much of a Frenchman, gave no sign on his countenance of the divine serenity which diminished the frightful ugliness of Schmucke. The German detected in the melancholy expression of his friend's face the increasing difficulties which made the calling of a parasite more and still

more distressing. In fact, by October, 1844, the number of houses where Pons dined had become, naturally, much restricted. The poor musician, reduced to the round of his own relations, had, as we shall see, extended beyond all bounds the meaning of the word family.

Our worthy *prix de Rome* was cousin to the first wife of Monsieur Camusot, the rich silk-mercer of the rue de la Bourdonnais. She had been a demoiselle Pons, sole heiress of the famous house of Pons Brothers, embroiderers to the Court; a house in which the father and mother of the musician had been sleeping-partners, they having founded it before the revolution of 1789. Subsequently the business was bought by Monsieur Rivet, in 1815, from the father of the first Madame Camusot. Camusot himself, having retired from business for about ten years, was in 1844 member of the General Council on manufactures, and deputy, etc. The honest Pons, regarded as a friend by the whole tribe of Camusot, considered himself the cousin of the children whom Camusot had by his second marriage, though in fact they were nothing whatever to him, not even connections.

The second Madame Camusot being a demoiselle Cardot, Pons thus introduced himself as a relation of the Camusots to the numerous family of the Cardots, a second bourgeois tribe which through its marriages formed a circle not less important than that of the Camusots. Cardot the notary, brother of the second Madame Camusot, had married a demoiselle Chiffreville. The celebrated family of the Chiffrevilles, sovereign of all chemical products, was closely allied in business with the wholesale drug trade; and the cock of the

roost of that business was for a long time Monsieur Anselme Popinot, whom the revolution of July launched, as we know, into the very heart of dynastic politics. Pons, hanging to the skirts of the Camusots and the Cardots, came into the family of the Chiffrevilles, and from thence into the family of the Popinots, — always in the character of a cousin of cousins.

This slight glance at the old musician's affiliations will let the reader understand how it was that in 1844 he was received on familiar terms, first, in the house of Monsieur le comte Popinot, peer of France, formerly minister of agriculture and commerce; secondly, in that of Monsieur Cardot, retired notary, and now mayor and deputy of an arrondissement in Paris; thirdly, by old Monsieur Camusot, deputy, member of the Municipal Council of Paris and of the Council on manufactures, now in expectation of a peerage; fourthly, in the family of Monsieur Camusot de Marville, son of Monsieur Camusot by his first marriage, and an actual cousin, — in fact the only real cousin of Sylvain Pons, though once removed.

This last Camusot, who to distinguish himself from his father and his half-brother had added the name of his country-seat (de Marville) to his own, was in 1844 president of the Cour-royale of Paris.

The former notary, Cardot, having married his daughter to his successor, named Berthier, Pons being part of the business, as it were, managed to lay hold of that dinner, — "before a notary," as he said.

Such was the bourgeois firmament which Pons called his family, and where he had painfully made good his rights to a knife and fork.

Of the ten houses, the one where the old musician might expect to be the most welcomed, that of the président Camusot de Marville, was the one which cost him the greatest pains. Alas! the president's wife, a daughter of the late Sieur Thirion, usher to the privy chamber of Louis XVIII. and Charles X., had never treated her husband's half-cousin kindly. Pons lost much time in the effort to soften this terrible relation, for after giving gratuitous music lessons to Mademoiselle Camusot he found it impossible to make a musician of that rather florid young lady. At the moment when we encounter him, Pons, with his hand on some precious article, was hurrying to the house of his cousin the president, where he used to fancy himself entering the Tuileries, so great an effect did the solemn green draperies, the brown tapestries, the moquette carpets, all portentously magisterial, produce upon his mind. Strange! he felt at his ease in the Hôtel Popinot, rue Basse-du-Rempart; doubtless because it was filled with works of art; for the former minister had, since his entrance into political life, contracted a mania for collecting choice things, — perhaps in opposition to the genius of politics, which collects, secretly, the vilest actions.

IV.

ONE OF THE MANY JOYS OF A COLLECTOR.

THE président de Marville lived in the rue de Hanovre, in a house bought by his wife within the last ten years, since the death of her father and mother the sieur and dame Thirion, who had left her about a hundred and fifty thousand francs of their savings. This house, whose aspect on the street where it faces north is rather gloomy, enjoys a southern exposure at the back on the courtyard, beyond which it overlooks a rather fine garden. The magistrate occupied the whole first floor, which had been under Louis XV. the residence of one of the greatest financiers of that day. The second floor being let to a rich old lady, the whole house had a quiet and dignified appearance quite in keeping with its official character. The remains of the formerly magnificent estate of Marville, on the purchase of which the president had spent the savings of twenty years and the fortune derived from his mother, comprised the château, a splendid erection such as may still be met with in Normandy, and a good farm, which brought in twelve thousand francs a year. A park of two hundred and fifty acres surrounded the mansion. The latter luxury, princely in these days, cost the president the value of over a thousand crowns; so that his land did not bring him more than nine thousand francs,

in hand, as they say. These nine thousand francs and his salary gave the president an income of some twenty thousand francs all told, — apparently sufficient for his needs, especially as he expected the ultimate half of his father's property, being, as he was, the only child of the first marriage; but the life of Paris and the demands of their official position compelled Monsieur and Madame de Marville to spend their whole income. Up to 1834, therefore, they were pressed for money.

This inventory of their property will explain why Mademoiselle de Marville, a young lady twenty-three years of age, was not married, in spite of a hundred thousand francs *dot*, and in spite also of the tempting bait of her future expectations, cleverly and frequently, and yet fruitlessly, put forth. Cousin Pons had listened for at least five years to the mournful complaints of Madame de Marville, who saw the rising young lawyers all married and the newly appointed judges in the lesser courts already fathers of families, and who had vainly exhibited the brilliant prospects of Mademoiselle de Marville before the uncharmed eyes of the young Vicomte Popinot, eldest son of the primate of druggists, — for whose benefit, according to envious souls in the quartier des Lombards, quite as much as for that of the younger Branch, the Revolution of July had been made.

When Pons reached the rue Choiseul and was about to turn into the rue de Hanovre, he experienced that inexplicable emotion which is the torment of a pure conscience, which inflicts the terror felt by the greatest scoundrels at the sight of a gendarme, and which was

caused in this instance solely by the doubt as to how he might be received by Madame de Marville. This grain of sand, which was tearing the fibres of his heart, had never yet worn itself smooth; its edges only grew sharper. And the servants of the house polished and sharpened them still further; for the small account the Camusot family made of their Cousin Pons reacted on their people, who, without proceeding to actual disrespect, considered him a species of pauper.

The chief enemy of poor Pons was a certain Madeleine Vivet, a lean, dried-up old maid, the waiting-woman of Madame C. de Marville and her daughter. This Madeleine, in spite of a pimpled face, and perhaps because of it and of the viperous sinuosities of her figure, had taken it into her head to become Madame Pons. In vain she spread before the eyes of the old celibate the twenty thousand francs she had laid by. Pons declined the pimpled happiness. Consequently, this backstairs Dido, who longed to be the cousin of her masters, played spiteful tricks upon the poor musician. When she heard his step on the stairs she would scream out, "Ah! here comes the poor relation," trying to make him hear the words. If she waited at table in the absence of the footman, she would pour very little wine and a great deal of water into the victim's glass, and give him the difficult task of getting it safely to his lips without spilling a drop, though it was almost running over. She would forget to serve the worthy man until her mistress reminded her (and in what a tone! the poor cousin blushed at it), and then she would spill the gravy on his clothes. In short, it was the warfare of an inferior knowing herself unpunishable

by a helpless superior. Madeleine, who was really both housekeeper and lady's maid, had lived with Monsieur and Madame Camusot since their marriage. She had seen her masters in the penury of their early life in the provinces, where Monsieur Camusot had been a judge of the Lower Courts at Alençon; she had helped them to live, first at Mantes, where Monsieur Camusot was president of the same courts, and later, after he came to Paris in 1828 and was appointed *juge d'instruction*. She was thus too close to the family not to have some motives for revenge. The desire to play her proud, ambitious mistress the ill-turn of becoming her master's cousin masked one of those hidden hatreds engendered by the gravel which makes an avalanche.

"Madame, here's your Monsieur Pons, spencer and all!" cried Madeleine, running into her mistress's room. "He ought to tell me the secret of how he has made that thing last for twenty-five years."

Hearing a man's step in the little salon, which was between the large salon and her bedroom, Madame Camusot looked at her daughter, and shrugged her shoulders.

"You always tell me so judiciously, Madeleine, and leave me no time to decide on anything," she said, angrily.

"Madame, Jean is out; I was alone. Monsieur Pons rang, I had to answer the door; and as he is nearly always at the house I could n't prevent him from coming in. He is just out there, getting off his spencer."

"My poor Minette," said Madame Camusot to her daughter, "we are caught; we shall have to dine at home. Come," she added, seeing the vexed face of

her dear Minette, "suppose we were to get rid of him forever?"

"Oh, the poor man!" answered Mademoiselle Camusot, laughing, "deprived of one of his dinners!"

The little salon here resounded with the fictitious cough of a man who tries to say, "I hear you."

"Well, let him come in," said Madame Camusot to Madeleine, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"You have come so early, monsieur," said Cécile Camusot, with a saucy air, "that you have caught us just as my mother was beginning to dress."

Pons, who had not failed to see the shrug of Madame Camusot's shoulders, was so cruelly hurt that he found no compliment ready on his lips, and was fain to content himself with the profound remark, "You are always charming, my little cousin!"

Then turning to the mother with a bow, "Dear cousin," he added, "you will not, I am sure, blame me for coming earlier than usual; for I bring you something you did me the pleasure to ask for —"

And the luckless Pons, who literally sawed in two the president, his wife, and Cécile every time he called them cousin, drew from the pocket of his coat a ravishing little oblong box, made of wood from the Antilles, and exquisitely carved.

"Ah! I had forgotten it," said Madame de Marville, dryly.

The exclamation was outrageous; for it took all the merit out of the attention of the good soul, whose only crime was that he was a poor relation.

"Well," she resumed, "you are very kind, cousin. How much do I owe you for this little trifle?"

The question made the poor man quiver inwardly; for he had counted on paying off the score of his dinners by this choice offering.

"I hoped you would allow me to present it to you," he said in a voice of some emotion.

"Ah, indeed!" replied Madame Camusot, "but we won't stand on ceremony, you and I; we know each other quite well enough to speak plainly. You are not rich enough to be lavish with your means; is n't it enough that you have taken trouble and lost your time running about among the shops —"

"You would not take the fan at all, my dear cousin, if you had to pay the value of it," returned the poor man, much wounded; "it is a masterpiece by Watteau, who painted both sides of it. But don't disturb yourself, cousin; it did not cost me a hundredth part of its value."

To tell a rich woman that she is poor is like telling the archbishop of Granada that his homilies are worthless. Madame de Marville was too puffed-up by the position of her husband and the ownership of the estate of Marville and the invitations she received to the court balls, not to be stabbed to the heart by such a remark, especially when it came from a poor musician in whose eyes she wished to stand as a benefactor.

"What stupid people they must be, from whom you buy such things!" she hastily remarked.

"There is no such thing as a stupid shop-keeper in Paris," answered Pons, almost dryly.

"Then it is you who are very clever," said Cécile, to calm the debate.

"My little cousin, I am clever enough to know Lancret, Pater, Watteau, and Greuze; but, above all, I desire to please your dear mamma."

Conceited and ignorant as she was, Madame de Marville was reluctant to seem to accept the smallest gift from a poor relation; and her ignorance in this case served her admirably, for she did not even know the name of Watteau. If anything can express the lengths to which the self-love of a collector (certainly one of the keenest, for it rivals that of an author) can go, it is the audacity with which Pons had just dared to make head against his cousin, for the first time in twenty years. Thunderstruck at his own hardihood, Pons subsided into a peaceable expression of countenance as he explained to Cécile the beauty of the delicate carving on the sticks of this marvellous fan. But to understand fully the secret of the heartsick trepidation to which the poor man was a prey, it is needful that we should give a slight sketch of the object of his terror.

At forty-six years of age, Madame de Marville, formerly small, blond, plump, and fresh, was still small, but was now withered. Her prominent forehead and pinched mouth, adorned in youth with delicate tints, had lately altered her expression, which was naturally disdainful, and given her a sullen, crabbed look. The habit of absolute control in her own home gave a hard and disagreeable turn to her countenance. Time had changed her blond hair to a faded chestnut. The eyes, still keen and caustic, revealed the haughty severity of her nature, embittered by concealed envy; for she felt herself a poor woman in the midst of that circle

of rich mushroom-bourgeois with whom Pons was in the habit of dining. She could not forgive the rich druggist, the former president of the Commercial courts, for becoming successively deputy, minister of state, count, and peer. She could not forgive her father-in-law for accepting, to the detriment of his eldest son, the appointment of deputy from his arrondissement at the time when Popinot was raised to the peerage. Her husband had seen eighteen years' service in the courts of Paris, but she was still hoping for the place of councillor to the Court of Appeals, — though he was, in fact, excluded from it by an incapacity which was well understood at the Palais. The minister of justice in 1844 regretted Camusot's appointment as president, or judge, of the Cour-royale, which took place in 1834; but he had been relegated to the chamber of indictments, where, thanks to his old experience as an examining judge, he did good service in deciding arrests. These mishaps and disappointments, after wearing upon Madame de Marville, who was not at all blind to the actual value of her husband, had rendered her really terrible. Her character, always aggressive, was now virulent. Aging and aged, rather than old, she had learned to be sharp and incisive as a brush, for the purpose of obtaining through fear what the world about her was inclined to deny. Satirical to an extreme, she had few friends. She was held in awe, for she surrounded herself with a number of old women tarred with the same brush, who upheld her under peril of retaliation.

Thus the relations of poor Pons to this devil in petticoats were like those of a schoolboy to a master who addressed him only with a birch. She could not

understand his sudden boldness, for she was ignorant of the value of his gift.

"Where did you get it?" asked Cécile, examining the treasure.

"Rue de Lappe, at a second-hand dealer's, who had just got it from a château they have dismantled near Dreux, at Aulnay, — a château where Madame de Pompadour occasionally lived before she built Ménars. The most splendid wainscotings ever seen have been rescued from it; they are so beautiful that Liénard, our finest carver in wood, has kept two oval panels for models, as the *ne plus ultra* of art. Such treasures! My dealer found this fan in a *bonheur-du-jour* of marquetry, which I should have bought if I collected such things; for me, however, it was out of the question: such a piece of furniture — it is by Reisener — is worth from four to five thousand francs. They are just beginning to find out in Paris that the famous German and French inlayers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries have made pictures — actual pictures — in wood. The merit of a collector is to be before the fashion. Why! five years hence, in Paris, they will pay for porcelains of Frankenthal, which I have been collecting for the last twenty years, twice as much as they do now for the pâte tendre of Sèvres!"

"What is Frankenthal?" asked Cécile.

"It is the name of the manufactory of porcelains belonging to the Elector-Palatine; it is older than our manufactory at Sèvres, — just as the famous gardens at Heidelberg, devastated by Turenne, had the ill-luck to exist before those of Versailles. Sèvres has copied a great deal from Frankenthal. The Germans — for we

must give them this credit — made admirable things before we did, in Saxony, and also in the Palatinate."

The mother and daughter looked at each other as if Pons were discoursing in Chinese; it is hard to believe how ignorant and limited to their own little round Parisians can be. They do not even know what they are being taught, though they may wish to learn it.

"How do you know Frankenthal when you see it?"

"Why, the signature!" cried Pons enthusiastically; "all these enchanting masterpieces are signed. The Frankenthal bears a *C* and a *T* (for Charles-Théodore) interlaced and surmounted with a prince's coronet. Old Dresden has the two swords, and the number of its class in gold. Vincennes signs with a horn. Vienna has a *V*, closed and barred. Berlin has two bars; Mayence, a wheel; Sèvres, the two *LL*'s; and the queen's-porcelain is marked with an *A*, meaning Antoinette, surmounted by the royal crown. In the eighteenth century all the sovereigns of Europe were rivals in the manufacture of porcelain. They enticed away each other's workmen. Watteau designed dinner-services for the manufactory at Dresden, and his works sell at an exorbitant price; but it is necessary to be a good judge, for Dresden is now manufacturing copies of them. Ah! in those days they made exquisite things, such as they will never make again."

"Nonsense!"

"No; never! They can never come up to certain marquetries, certain porcelains, — just as they can never equal the paintings of Raphael, or Titian, or Rembrandt, nor those of Van Eyck, nor even Cranach! Why, look at the Chinese! they are wonderfully clever

and skilful; and yet to-day they are only recopying the fine specimens of their porcelain called the Grand-Mandarin. Two vases of old Grand-Mandarin of the best shape are worth six, eight, ten thousand francs, and mere copies of them cost two hundred."

"You are joking."

"Cousin, such prices astonish you, and yet they are a mere nothing. A full dinner-service for twelve persons in Sèvres pâte tendre (which is not porcelain) is worth a hundred thousand francs, and that moreover is the actual cost of its manufacture. A service of that kind was sold at Sèvres, in 1750, for fifty thousand francs. I have seen the original bill of sale."

"To come back to this fan," said Cécile, in whose eyes that treasure seemed a great deal too old.

"You must know that I began to hunt for it as soon as your dear mamma did me the honor to request a fan," resumed Pons. "I looked through all the antiquity shops in Paris without finding anything of any value, — for of course I wanted a masterpiece for my dear cousin. I hoped to give her the fan of Marie-Antoinette, — that most exquisite of all the celebrated fans. But yesterday I was dazzled by this divine masterpiece, which Louis XV. himself most assuredly ordered. Do you ask why I went to the rue de Lappe for a fan, — to an Auvergnat who sells brasses and iron-work and gilt furniture? Well, I believe in the actual intelligence of works of art; they *know* connoisseurs, they call them, they say 'zit, zit!'" —

Madame de Marville shrugged her shoulders and glanced at her daughter, unperceived by Pons.

"I know the ways of those pillagers, those Auverg-

nats, — every one of them. 'What have you to-day, Papa Monistrol? Have you got any carved portals?' I asked the trader, who always lets me look over his things before he shows them to the large dealers. When I asked him that, Monistrol told me how Liénard, who was carving some fine things in the chapel at Dreux for the civil list, had rescued all the wainscotings from the fangs of Parisian dealers at Aulnay while they were busy with the porcelains and the inlaid-work. 'I have n't got much,' he answered, 'not more than enough to pay for my journey.' Then he showed me the *bonheur-du-jour*, — a marvel! from designs of Boucher, done in marquetry with such art! — enough to make a man drop on his knees! 'See, monsieur,' he said, 'I have just found this fan in a little locked drawer; the key was lost, but I pried it open, — you can tell me who I ought to sell it to;' and he drew out this little carved box made of wood from the Antilles. 'See,' he said, 'it is Pompadour of the flowery gothic.' 'Oh, yes,' I answered, 'the box is well enough, and I might take it, — a box like that; but as for the fan, my good Monistrol, I have n't a Madame Pons who would care for the old gem. Besides, now-a-days they make new ones which are very pretty; they paint them on vellum in a really marvellous way, and sell them at a bargain. Don't you know there are two thousand painters in Paris?' So saying, I carelessly opened the fan; but I carefully concealed my admiration, and glanced coldly at those two little pictures, which have a freedom, a touch, an execution truly bewitching! I held in my hands the fan of Madame de Pompadour! Watteau outdid himself when he designed it! 'How

much do you want for the whole piece of furniture?' I asked. 'Oh, a thousand francs,' he said, 'I have been offered that already!' I named a price for the fan, corresponding as near as I could guess to the costs of his journey. We looked each other through and through, and I saw I'd caught him. I put the fan back into its box at once, so that the Auvergnat should n't examine it, and I went into ecstasies over the carving of the box, which is, really and truly, a gem. I said to Monistrol, 'If I buy it, it is for the sake of the box; that does tempt me. As to your *bonheur-du-jour*, you can get more than a thousand francs for it. Just see the chasing of that brass! why, it's a model, — you can make a great thing of it; it has never been reproduced; like everything that was ever made for Madame de Pompadour, it is unique.' And there was my man, all on fire about his *bonheur-du-jour*. He forgot the fan; I got it for nothing in return for the revelation I made him of the beauty of Reisener's work; that's the whole of it! Ah! one has to be very knowing to manage such bargains; it's a battle of eye to eye; and where's there an eye like a Jew's or an Auvergnat's?"

The inimitable pantomime, the rapture of the old artist, which made him, as he recounted the triumph his craftiness had won from the ignorance of the trader, a model worthy of a Dutch painter, were all lost upon the mother and daughter, who exchanged a frigid and contemptuous glance which meant, "What an old oddity!"

"Does that sort of thing amuse you?" asked Madame de Marville.

Pons, chilled to the bone by such a question, longed to rush at Madame de Marville and pommel her.

"Why, my dear cousin," he said, "it's the hunt of masterpieces! we are face to face with adversaries who protect the game; it is trick for trick, diamond cut diamond; a treasure, a masterpiece to wrest from Normans, Jews, and Auvergnats! Why, it's like a fairy tale, a princess guarded by magicians!"

"How do you know it is Wat — what did you call him?"

"Watteau, my dear cousin, — one of the greatest French painters of the eighteenth century! Here, don't you see the signature?" he cried, showing her one of the pastorals, which represented a ring danced by fictitious shepherdesses and great lords as their swains. "What swing! what animation! what color! And it is done — with a stroke as it were! like the flourish of a writing-master, no effort! you don't perceive the work! On the other side, see! a dance in a ball-room! It is winter and summer! What ornamentation, and how well-preserved! Don't you see the ferule is of gold, and on each side it has a little ruby, which I've cleaned up."

"If that is so, cousin, I really cannot accept a gift of such value from you. You had much better invest the money where it will bring you some return," said Madame de Marville, who would have liked nothing better than to keep the magnificent fan.

"It is high time that having served Vice it should now be in the hands of Virtue!" said the worthy man, recovering self-possession. "It has taken a hundred years to bring about such a miracle. You may be sure that no royal princess has anything comparable to this

treasure, for unfortunately human nature is so constituted that it does more for a Madame de Pompadour than for a virtuous queen."

"Very well, I accept it," said Madame de Marville, laughing. "Cécile, my angel, go and tell Madeleine to see that the dinner is worthy of our cousin."

She meant by that to square the account; the message, spoken aloud contrary to the rules of good breeding, was so like giving change for a payment that Pons blushed like a young girl detected in a fault. The gravel was very coarse, and rolled about his heart for some time. Cécile, a very freckled young woman, whose bearing, infected with pedantry, was an imitation of her mother's judicial severity with a touch of the latter's sharpness, disappeared at once, leaving poor Pons in the clutches of his terrible relation.

V.

ONE OF THE THOUSAND AFFRONTS A POOR RELATION HAS TO BEAR.

"SHE is very sweet, my little Lili," said Madame de Marville, using the childish abbreviation formerly given to the name of Cécile.

"Charming!" echoed the old musician, twirling his thumbs.

"I can't understand the times we live in," said his cousin. "What is the good of having a president of the Cour-royale of Paris and a commander of the Legion of honor for your father, and a millionnaire deputy, a future peer of France, and the richest of all the wholesale silk merchants for your grandfather, I should like to know?"

The devotion of the president to the new dynasty had recently won him the ribbon of a commander of the Legion of honor, a favor attributed by envious acquaintances to the friendship which allied him with Popinot. That minister, in spite of his natural modesty, had allowed himself, as we have seen, to be made a count, — "for the sake of my son," he used to say to his numerous friends.

"Money is what everybody wants in these days," answered Cousin Pons; "none but the rich are respected and —"

"What a state of things it would have been," interrupted Madame de Marville, "if Heaven had left me my little Charles!"

"With two children you would have been poor," replied her cousin. "That's the result of the equal division of property. But don't worry yourself, my beautiful cousin, Cécile will end by making a good marriage. I don't see such an accomplished girl anywhere."

This was how Pons debased his soul before his amphitryons; he repeated their ideas, and uttered platitudes upon them, after the fashion of a Greek chorus. He dared not surrender himself to the originality of the true artist, which had welled up within him in his youth, with many a delicate trait now nearly smothered by the habit of effacing himself, and which other people forced back whenever, as at this moment, it reappeared.

"But I was married with a twenty thousand francs *dot*, only —"

"Ah! in 1819, my cousin," interrupted Pons; "and besides, it was *you*, a woman of mind, a young girl under the protection of Louis XVIII."

"But my daughter is an angel of perfection; she has a fine mind, she is full of heart; she will have a hundred thousand francs in marriage, without counting her expectations; and here she is, still on our hands —"

Madame de Marville went on talking about herself and her daughter for twenty minutes, giving vent to the dismal complaints peculiar to mothers who are in the power of a marriageable daughter. During the last

twenty years, when the old man had dined weekly with his cousin Camusot, he had never heard a single word of the president's personal affairs, or of his life, or his health. Pons was, moreover, a species of gutter for domestic confidences; his well-known and necessary discretion offering the strongest security, — a necessary discretion indeed, for a single chance word would have closed to him the doors of ten houses. His vocation of listener was therefore encouraged by constant approbation; he smiled at all he heard, blamed no one and excused no one; to him they were all in the right. In fact, he could no longer be rated as a man; he was a stomach. In the course of her long tirade Madame de Marville admitted, though not without some precautions, that she was inclined to accept blindly any proposals for her daughter that might present themselves. She went so far as to say that she should be satisfied with a man forty-eight years old, provided he had an income of twenty thousand francs.

"Cécile is in her twenty-third year, and if she should be so unlucky as to reach twenty-five or twenty-six it would be excessively difficult to marry her. The world asks why a young girl 'hangs fire' so long. Already people in our circle are talking about her, and we have exhausted all the commonplace reasons: 'She is very young.' — 'She is too fond of her parents to leave them.' — 'She is happy at home.' — 'She is fastidious, and wants a distinguished name.' We are getting ridiculous; I feel it. Besides, Cécile is weary of waiting; she suffers, poor little thing."

"Why does she suffer?" asked Pons, foolishly.

"Because," replied the mother in the tone of a

duenna, "she is humiliated by seeing all her friends married before her."

"My dear cousin, what has happened since I last had the pleasure of dining here, to make you think of men who are forty-eight years old?" asked the poor musician, humbly.

"This has happened," answered Madame de Marville; "we were to have had an interview with a privy councillor whose son is thirty years old and has a considerable fortune, and for whom Monsieur de Marville would have obtained through the Treasury a place as referee in the Court of Exchequer, — he is there already as a supernumerary. We have just been informed that this young man has had the folly to go off to Italy in the train of a divinity of the *bal Mabille.* It 's a disguised refusal. They don't want to give us the young man, whose mother is dead, and who has in his own right an income of thirty thousand francs, while waiting for his father's fortune. So you must forgive our ill-humor, cousin; you have come just at the crisis."

While Pons was trying to find the complimentary reply which invariably came to him too late in presence of the amphitryons of whom he stood in awe, Madeleine entered with a note for Madame de Marville, and waited for an answer. The missive was as follows: —

"Let us pretend, dear mamma, that this note is sent from the Palais by my father, and that he tells you to take me to dine with his friend and renew the affair of my marriage. *The cousin* will then go away, and we can follow out our plans at the Popinots."

"How did your master send this note?" asked Madame de Marville, hastily.

"By a porter from the Palais," answered the grim Madeleine, boldly.

This reply of the old waiting-woman proved to her mistress that she had brewed the plot in concert with the disappointed Cécile.

"Say that my daughter and I will be there at half-past five."

As soon as Madeleine disappeared, Madame de Marville turned to Pons with the sham courtesy that rasps a sensitive soul roughly, like the effect produced on the tongue of an epicure by a mixture of vinegar and milk.

"My dear cousin," she said, "the dinner is ordered; you must eat it without us, for my husband writes from the court-room to say that the councillor still wishes the marriage, and we are to dine with him to-day: you understand that there is no ceremony between us. Make yourself entirely at home. You see the frankness with which I treat you; I make no mystery of it. You would not wish me to lose a marriage for my little angel?"

"I? my dear cousin, on the contrary I desire of all things to find her a husband; but in the circle I visit —"

"Of course it is not likely there," she interrupted rudely. "Well, then, you will stay? Cécile shall come and sit with you while I dress."

"Oh, cousin, I can go and dine elsewhere," said the poor man. Though cruelly hurt by the manner in which she had made him feel his indigence, he was even more frightened by the prospect of being left alone with the servants.

"Why should you? the dinner is prepared, the servants will eat it."

When he heard the insulting speech Pons started up erect, as though the knob of a galvanic battery had touched him; he bowed coldly to his cousin and made for his spencer. The door of Cécile's bedroom, which opened into the little salon, was a-jar, so that as he glanced before him into a mirror, Pons saw the young girl in fits of laughter, nodding to her mother with pantomimic gestures which revealed some base mystification to the old man. He went slowly down the staircase, with difficulty restraining his tears. He felt he was being driven from the house, yet without knowing why.

"I am too old," he said; "the world hates old age and poverty, — two hideous things. I will never again dine anywhere without an invitation."

Heroic words!

The door of the kitchen, which was on the ground-floor and faced the porter's lodge, was open, as it frequently is in houses that are occupied by their owners, and where the porte cochère is consequently shut; the old man could therefore hear the laughter of the cook and the footman, to whom Madeleine was relating the trick just played upon him, for she did not expect him to evacuate the premises so hastily. The footman highly approved of any joke against a retainer of the house, who, as he said, gave him nothing but "a bit of a crown" at the end of the year.

"Yes, but if he takes offence and never comes back," remarked the cook, "it will be three francs the less for all of us on New Year's day."

"Well, how should he hear of it?" said the footman.

"Bah!" cried Madeleine, "a little sooner or a little later, what does it matter? He bores the masters of all the houses where he dines, and before long they'll all turn him out."

At this moment the old man called to the porter, "The door, if you please." The cry, uttered in grievous accents, was followed by a profound silence in the kitchen.

"He was listening," said the footman.

"Well, no help for it, — or rather, so much the better," retorted Madeleine; "he's a dead rat."

The poor man, who had not lost a syllable of the kitchen-talk, heard even these last words. He returned home along the boulevards in a state such as an old woman might have been in after a deadly struggle with assassins. He walked with convulsive swiftness, talking to himself, for his bleeding honor drove him like a straw before a furious wind. At last, about five o'clock, he reached the boulevard du Temple, without knowing how he got there; and yet, strange to say, he felt not the slightest appetite.

In order to comprehend the complete upset which the return of Pons at this hour produced in his own home, the explanations heretofore promised as to Madame Cibot must now be given.

VI.

SPECIMEN OF DOORKEEPERS (MALE AND FEMALE).

THE rue de Normandie is one of those streets where, if we advance into the middle of it, we might believe ourselves in the provinces; grass grows there, a passing step is an event, and the inhabitants all know each other. The houses date from the period under Henry IV., when a quarter was laid out in which each street was to bear the name of a province, and in the centre of which a fine square was to be dedicated to France herself. The idea of the quartier de l'Europe was a repetition of this plan. The world repeats itself everywhere and in everything, — even in speculations. The house in which the old musicians lived was an old mansion between court and garden; but the front of the house, on the street, had been built at a time when the Marais — during the last century — was the extreme of fashion. The two friends occupied the whole of the second floor of the mansion. It was a double house, belonging to Monsieur Pillerault, an octogenarian, who left the superintendence of it to Monsieur and Madame Cibot, his doorkeepers for more than twenty-six years. Now, as the emoluments of a doorkeeper in the Marais are not great, the Sieur Cibot added to his tithe of a sou per franc, and his log levied upon each load of

wood, the resources of his personal industry; he was a tailor, like many another concierge. In course of time he had ceased to work for the master-tailors; for, as a result of the confidence his neighbors of the smaller bourgeoisie placed in him, he enjoyed a monopoly of the repairs, darns, and renovations "as good as new," in a perimeter of three streets. The porter's lodge was large and airy, and adjoined a bedroom. Thus the Cibot household was considered highly fortunate by all the other concierges of the arrondissement.

Cibot — a stunted little man, grown olive-colored by dint of perpetually sitting cross-legged like a Turk, on a table which raised him to the height of a barred window looking on the street — earned about fifty sous a day at his trade. He still worked at it, though he was fifty-eight years old; but fifty-eight happens to be the prosperous age for a concierge, for by that time he has fitted into his lodge, and the lodge holds him as an oyster-shell holds the oyster; above all, he is "known to the neighborhood."

Madame Cibot, formerly a handsome oyster-woman, had left her stand at the Cadran-Bleu out of love for Cibot, when she was twenty-eight years of age, having passed through the usual adventures which a beautiful oyster-seller encounters without ever seeking them. The good looks of the women of the people seldom last long, especially when they are trained like wall-fruit at the door of a restaurant. The scorching blaze of the kitchen hardens their features, the dregs of the bottles drunk in company with the waiters filter through their complexions; and no bloom wilts quite as quickly as that of a handsome oyster-woman. Fortunately for Madame

Cibot, a legitimate marriage and life in a porter's lodge came in time to preserve her good looks; she continued to be the model of a Rubens, and retained a vigorous beauty, which her rivals in the rue de Normandie calumniated, and called blowsy. Her fresh tints might be compared to those appetizing mounds of Isigny butter to be seen in the markets; yet in spite of her corpulence, she displayed astounding agility in the exercise of her functions. Madame Cibot had now reached an age when her style of woman resorts to the razor. Is not that as good as saying she was forty-eight years old? A female doorkeeper with a moustache is the best guaranty of order and security for the owner of a house. If Delacroix could have seen Madame Cibot proudly leaning on the handle of her broom, he would certainly have sketched her as Bellona.

The position of the Cibot couple was destined, strangely enough, to affect in future days that of the two Nut-crackers; and the historian, if he would be faithful, is obliged to enter into some details respecting the porter's lodge. The house brought a rental of about eight thousand francs; for it had three suites of appartements, double in depth, upon the street, and three more in the old mansion between the court and garden. In addition to these, a trader in old iron, named Rémonencq, occupied a shop which opened on the street. This Rémonencq had evolved within a few months into a dealer in curios, and knew so well the bric-a-bracquous value of Pons that he bowed to him from the depths of his shop whenever the old musician went out of the house or returned to it. The porter's fee, the sou per franc, brought about four hundred francs a year to the Cibot

household, which, moreover, got its lodging and its firewood for nothing. As the united wages of husband and wife averaged seven or eight hundred francs a year, they made up, counting their New Year's gratuities, an income of sixteen hundred francs, all of which they spent; for the pair lived at a better rate than the body of the common people. "You can only live once," Madame Cibot used to say. She was born during the Revolution, and was, as we see, ignorant of the catechism.

Through her former relations with the Cadran-Bleu, Madame Cibot had acquired certain culinary accomplishments which made her husband an object of envy to all his male companions. Thus it happened that at their present ripe age, with their feet on the threshold of old age, the pair had laid by barely a hundred francs. Well clothed and well fed, they enjoyed throughout the neighborhood the consideration due to twenty-six years of strict integrity. If they owned no property, at least they "had n't none of other people's," as Madame Cibot, who was lavish with her negatives, frequently remarked. Both were proud of their honest lives open to the daylight, of the esteem which half-a-dozen streets bestowed upon them, of the autocratic power which their proprietor allowed them to exercise over the premises; and yet they groaned in secret at having no invested means. Cibot complained of twinges in his hands and legs, and Madame Cibot deplored the fact that her poor Cibot was compelled to work hard at his age. The day will come when, after thirty years of such a life, a concierge will accuse the government of injustice, and demand the decoration of the Legion of honor! Every time

the gossips of a neighborhood tell the tale of some servant who, after eight or ten years' service, gets a snug bequest of three or four hundred francs' annuity, doleful complaints go from lodge to lodge, — which may give an idea of the jealousies that pervade the lower callings in Paris.

"There now! it will never happen to us poor fellows to get mentioned in a will! We 've no chance. We are more useful than the servants, any day. We are trusted with everything; we make out the receipts, we collect the cash; and yet we are treated like dogs, neither more nor less!"

"There ain't nothing but ill luck!" said Madame Cibot. "If I 'd left Cibot to his den and gone and made myself a cook, we 'd have had thirty thousand francs invested by this time," she cried, as, with her hands on her big hips, she stood gossiping with a neighbor. "I hain't taken life right. Talk about being lodged and warmed, and wanting for nothing, indeed!"

When, in 1836, the two friends arrived, and occupied together the whole of the second floor of the old mansion, they occasioned a sort of revolution in the Cibot household; in this wise: Schmucke, and also his friend Pons, was accustomed to employ the doorkeepers, male or female, of the houses where he lived, to take charge of his rooms. The two musicians therefore agreed, when they settled in the rue de Normandie, to make an arrangement with Madame Cibot, who forthwith became their housekeeper for the consideration of twenty-five francs a month, — twelve francs fifty centimes for each of them. At the end of a year this portress-emeritus

reigned over the household of the two old bachelors, just as she reigned over the house of Monsieur Pillerault (the great-uncle of Madame la comtesse Popinot); their affairs were her affairs, and she always called them "my two gentlemen." At last, finding the Nutcrackers as meek as sheep, easy to get on with, never suspicious, mere babes as it were, she began, with the heart of a woman of the people, to protect and adore them, and to serve the old men with such genuine devotion that she sometimes lectured and warned them, protecting them the while against the many frauds which in Paris swell all household expenses. For twenty-five francs a month the two bachelors, unintentionally and unawares, acquired a mother. As soon as they perceived Madame Cibot's real value, the two musicians artlessly presented her with little gifts and thanks and praises, which drew closer still the bonds of the domestic alliance. Madame Cibot preferred a thousand times being appreciated at her true value to any payment, — a sentiment which tends, if well understood, to eke out the wages. Cibot himself went of errands, mended the clothes, and did all else that was in his line, for his wife's gentlemen, at half price.

Finally, at the beginning of the second year, a new element of mutual friendship was developed in the close relation between the second floor and the porter's lodge. Schmucke concluded a bargain with Madame Cibot, which satisfied his own laziness and his desire to live without giving his mind to mundane affairs. For the sum of thirty sous a day, or forty-five francs a month, Madame Cibot engaged to supply him with breakfast and dinner. Pons, finding his friend's breakfast very

satisfactory, made a like bargain for his own breakfast at eighteen francs a month. This system of supply, which threw a nice little monthly sum into the receipts of the lodge, made the two tenants inviolable beings, angels, cherubim, divinities. It is very doubtful if the King of the French, who understands such matters, is as well served as were the two Nut-crackers. For them, the milk came pure from the can; they read gratuitously the newspapers of the first and third floors, whose tenants got up late, and who were told, if they inquired, that their papers had not yet come. Madame Cibot, moreover, kept the appartement and the old man's clothes and the landing, and indeed everything, in a state of Flemish cleanliness. Schmucke, poor fellow, enjoyed a happiness he had never dared to hope for; Madame Cibot made his life easy. He paid about six francs monthly for his washing, which she did herself, together with its mending; and he spent fifteen francs besides for tobacco. These three items of expense made a total monthly sum of sixty-six francs; which, multiplied by twelve, amounted to seven hundred and ninety-two francs a year. Add two hundred and fifty-eight francs for rent and extras, and we have a thousand and fifty. Cibot made Schmucke's clothes, and the average of that expense was a hundred and fifty. So this profound philosopher lived at a cost of twelve hundred francs a year. How many people there are in Europe whose sole desire is to reside in Paris, who will be agreeably surprised to hear that they can live there happily in the rue de Normandie, in the Marais, under the protection of a Madame Cibot, for twelve hundred francs a year!

Madame Cibot was amazed when she saw Pons coming home at five in the afternoon. Not only had such a thing never happened, but "her monsieur" did not even see her, and did not bow to her.

"Well, well, Cibot!" she said to her husband. "Monsieur Pons has either turned millionnaire or crazy."

"It looks like it," returned Cibot, letting fall the sleeve of a coat in which he was making, to use the slang of his trade, *un poignard.*

VII.

A LIVING EDITION OF THE FABLE OF THE TWO PIGEONS.

At the moment when Pons was mechanically returning home, Madame Cibot was getting Schmucke's dinner ready. It consisted of a certain ragoût, whose appetizing odor was wafted through the courtyard, and was made of scraps of boiled beef bought at a cook-shop and fricasseed in butter with onions cut in fine strips, until the butter was wholly absorbed by the meat and onions, so that this backstairs delicacy had the appearance of something fried. This dish, lovingly concocted for Cibot and Schmucke, between whom Madame Cibot divided it equally, accompanied by a bottle of beer and a bit of cheese, sufficed the old German music-master for his dinner. Some days it was the boiled beef fricasseed with onions; other days there were odds and ends of chicken *sauté;* then again, slices of cold beef with vinegar and parsley, and a fish cooked with a sauce of Madame Cibot's own invention, in which a mother might have eaten her own children without perceiving it; on other occasions a dish of venison, according to the quality or the quantity sold second-hand from the restaurants of the boulevards to the hucksters of the rue Boucherat. Such was Schmucke's bill of fare; he made no complaint, and was satisfied with all his

"goot Matame Zipod" gave him. So, from day to day, the good Madame Cibot lessened the fare, until she managed to supply it at a cost to herself of twenty sous.

"I must go up and see if nothing hain't happened to him, — the poor dear man!" said Madame Cibot to her spouse; "here 's Monsieur Schmucke's dinner, done to a turn."

Madame Cibot covered the earthenware dish with a common china-plate, and then, in spite of her age, she reached the second floor just at the moment when Pons opened Schmucke's door.

"Vas ees de madder, my goot frent?" asked the German, frightened by the convulsed face of Pons.

"I will tell you all; but I've come to dine with you."

"To tine! to tine!" cried Schmucke, delighted. "Pud dad ees imbossible!" he added, remembering the gastronomic habits of his friend.

At this moment the old German perceived Madame Cibot, who was listening, according to her legitimate rights as housekeeper. Seized by one of those inspirations which only come to the heart of a true friend, he went straight up to her and drew her out upon the landing.

"Matame Zipod, my goot Bons lofes goot dings to eat. Go to der Gadran-Ploo, and gate a naice liddel tinner, — Anchofies, magaroni, — a tinner fit for Lugullus!"

"What's that?" demanded Madame Cibot.

"Eh!" said Schmucke; "vy, it ees ein frigandeau of feal, it is a goot feesh, a pottle of Porteaux, — eferyding dat ees goot and tainty, — rice groquettes, some

smoaked pagon. Bay for it; doan't say a vort. I'll gif you de money, myself, in de morning."

Schmucke came back, rubbing his hands with a joyous air; but his face fell gradually back into an expression of stupefaction as he listened to the sorrows that had suddenly overwhelmed the heart of his friend. He endeavored to console him by depicting the world from his own point of view. Paris was a perpetual tornado; men and women were whirled about in the mazes of a furious waltz; you must never expect anything of society which only looks at the surface, and "nefer ad de inderior," he said. He related for the hundredth time how, from year to year, the only three pupils that he loved, by whom he was cherished, for whom he would have laid down his life, from whom he even received a little pension of nine hundred francs, to which each contributed the equal share of three hundred francs, had so utterly forgotten, year after year, to come and see him, were so carried away by the violent current of Parisian life that he had not been received by them, when he called, for more than three years. (It is true that Schmucke presented himself at the houses of these great ladies at ten o'clock in the morning.) And finally, he asserted that his little pension was paid quarterly by a notary.

"And yet," added he, "dey are hearts of cold; dey are my liddel Zaind-Zeegilias, lofely laties, — Matame de Bordentuère, Matame Fantenesse, Matame ti Dillet. Ven I zee dem it ees in der Jambs-Élysées; dey doan't zee me — pud dey lofe me, and I gan go and tine mit dem, and dey vould be clad. I gan go to der goundry-houses; pud I breffare to pe mit my frent Bons, begause I gan zee him at all hours, ven I laike."

Pons took Schmucke's hand within both of his, and wrung it with a movement by which his whole soul was communicated; the two old men remained thus for some minutes, like lovers who meet again after long absence.

"Tine mit me, here, effry tay!" cried Schmucke, inwardly blessing Madame de Marville's cruelty. "Zee! ve vill prig-à-brag togedder; and der teffel shall nefare get his dail eenzide our toors."

To explain the meaning of this truly heroic offer "ve vill prig-à-brag togedder," it must be admitted that Schmucke was in a state of crass ignorance as to bric-à-bracology. It took the whole force of his friendship to keep him from breaking the treasures in the salon and in the appartement given up to Pons for a museum. Schmucke, wholly devoted to music, a composer for his own happiness, looked upon all the little follies of his friend, as a fish invited to a flower-show at the Luxembourg might have looked upon the choicest blossoms. He respected those marvels of art solely because of the respect which Pons manifested as he dusted his treasures. He responded, "Yes, dad ees breddy!" to the admirations of his friend, just as a mother replies with unmeaning phrases to the gestures of a child that cannot yet talk. Schmucke had seen Pons change his clock seven times since the two friends had lived together, always exchanging it for one which he considered more choice. Pons possessed at the present moment a magnificent clock, made of ebony by Boule, inlaid with brass and carved in Boule's earliest manner. Boule had two manners, just as Raphael had three. By the first he wedded brass to ebony; in the second he immolated him-

self, against his convictions, to tortoise-shell, and produced masterpieces solely to vanquish his competitors, who had invented the tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl inlay. In spite of Pons's learned disquisitions, Schmucke could not see the slightest difference between the magnificent clock in Boule's first manner and any of its ten predecessors. But because they made his friend happy Schmucke took even more care of these "blaydings," as he called them, than the collector himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that Schmucke's heroic speech had the effect of calming his friend's despair, for the "ve vill pric-à-prac togedder" of the worthy German meant, "I will spend some money on brig-à-brag if you will only dine here."

"Dinner is ready, gentlemen," said Madame Cibot, with surprising composure.

We can readily understand Pons's astonishment at seeing and enjoying the dinner which he owed to Schmucke's friendship. Such emotion, so rare in life, does not come from the steady devotion which makes two men say to each other perpetually, "I am your other self," for to that they grow accustomed; no, it is caused by the comparison which such proofs of the happiness of domestic intimacy afford to the brutal selfishness of the ways of the world. It is such experience of the world which ceaselessly links anew lover to lover, and friend to friend, when two true souls are wedded either by love or friendship. Pons wiped great tears from his eyes, and Schmucke was obliged to dry the moisture in his. They said nothing, but they loved each other the more; and they nodded little signs to each other, whose balm soothed the anguish of the gravel

ground by Madame de Marville into the heart of Pons. Schmucke rubbed his hands till he nearly peeled off the skin, for he suddenly conceived a scheme which stuns a German only when rapidly forced out of his brain, congealed, as it is, by respect for the sovereign princes.

"My goot Bons," he began.

"I guess what you want: you wish that we should dine together every day."

"I vish dat I vas zo reech as to tine like dat effry tay," answered Schmucke, sadly.

Madame Cibot, to whom Pons occasionally gave tickets for the theatre, — a gift which put him on the same level in her maternal heart as her boarder Schmucke, — here made a proposal, which was as follows: —

"My goodness!" she said; "for three francs I'll give you a dinner, — without no wine, — that 'll make you lick the dishes and leave 'em so clean they won't want no washing."

"It ees drue," cried Schmucke. "I tine pedder mit vat Matame Zipod gooks for me, dan oder beoble who eat der King's deeshes."

In the fervor of his new hope, the reverent German went so far as to imitate the irreverence of the minor newspapers, by calumniating the fare paid for at so much a head at the royal table.

"You don't say so!" answered Pons. "Well, then, I 'll try it to-morrow."

As he heard the words, Schmucke sprang from one end of the table to the other, dragging the cloth, the dishes, and the water-bottles after him, and seized Pons in a close embrace, comparable to that of one

gas catching hold of another gas for which it has an affinity.

"Vat choy!" he cried.

"Monsieur will dine here every day!" proudly exclaimed Madame Cibot, with tender emotion.

Without knowing the circumstance to which she owed the accomplishment of her dream, the worthy dame descended into the porter's lodge much as Josepha comes upon the scene in "William Tell." She rattled down the plates and dishes, crying out, —

"Cibot! go and get two coffees at the café Turc, and tell the waiter they are for me!"

Then she sat down with her hands upon her sturdy knees, and looked out of the window at the opposite wall.

"I'll go this very evening and consult Madame Fontaine," she cried.

Madame Fontaine was the fortune-teller of all the cooks, lacqueys, and porters in the Marais.

"Since those two gentlemen came to live in this house we've put two thousand francs in the savings bank. In eight years! what luck! I wonder if I had n't better not earn nothing out of Monsieur Pons's dinner, and that'll encourage him to dine at home? Ma'ame Fontaine's hen can advise me about that."

As she had seen no heirs belonging either to Pons or Schmucke, Madame Cibot for the last three years had indulged the hope of a mention in the wills of "her gentlemen;" and her zeal redoubled under the pressure of a cupidity which had sprouted rather late in life, like her beard, — which up to that time had been the beard of integrity.

By dining out every day, Pons had hitherto escaped the absolute servitude in which it pleased Madame Cibot to hold her gentlemen. The nomadic life of the old troubadour-collector had hitherto scared the vague ideas of testamentary seduction which curvetted through the brain of Madame Cibot, but which, from the date of this memorable dinner, took the shape of a formidable plan. Fifteen minutes later she reappeared in the dining-room, armed with two excellent cups of coffee, flanked by two *petit verres* of Kirchwasser.

"Long lif Matame Zipod!" cried Schmucke; "she has tefined joost vat ve vanted."

After a few lamentations from poor Pons, which Schmucke combatted with such billings and cooings as the sitting pigeon ought to lavish on the traveller pigeon, the two friends went out together. Schmucke was unwilling to leave his friend to himself in the trouble of mind which the masters and servants at the Camusot's had occasioned him. He knew Pons, and was sure that cruelly sad reflections were likely to seize him even on his magisterial seat in the orchestra, and thus destroy all the good effect of his home-coming to the nest. When Schmucke brought Pons back at midnight, he still had him by the arm, and, like a lover escorting an adored mistress, he pointed out to him the spots where the pavement ended, or where it began; he warned him of all the gutters; he would fain have had the pavement cotton, the skies blue, and the angels whispering in his friend's ear the music which they sang in his. He had conquered the last province which was not already his own in that other heart!

For nearly three months Pons dined every day with Schmucke. At first he was obliged to retrench eighty francs a month from the sum he usually spent on his collections; for his wine cost him about thirty-five francs a month in addition to the forty-five francs for his dinner. Then, notwithstanding all the painstaking and Teutonic buffoonery of Schmucke, the old artist regretted the well-cooked dishes, the little glasses of liqueur, the good coffee, the chat, the empty civilities, the guests, and the gossip of the houses where he formerly dined. We cannot break up the habits of thirty-six years in the decline of life. Wine at a hundred and thirty francs a hogshead is poor liquid to pour into the glass of an epicure; and each time Pons carried the glass to his lips he recalled with poignant regret the exquisite wines of his amphitryons. So, by the end of three months the sharp suffering which had almost broken his sensitive heart was allayed; and he thought of the pleasures of society just as an old man regrets a mistress whom he has abandoned for her infidelities. Though he tried to hide the melancholy which consumed him, it was evident that the old musician was attacked by one of those mysterious diseases whose seat is in the moral being. To explain the nostalgia caused by a shattered habit, we need only point to one of the thousand nothings which, like the fine rings of a coat of mail, wrap the soul in a network of iron. One of the keenest pleasures in the former life of Pons — a pleasure common to a poor relation sponging for a dinner — was the *surprise*, the gastronomic effect, of some unexpected dish, some dainty, added triumphantly by the mistress of a bourgeois house to give a festal air to her dinner.

This tickling charm to his stomach was lacking at home, for Madame Cibot always proudly informed him of the bill of fare. The periodic piquancy of daily life had totally disappeared. His dinner was eaten without the unanticipated dainty which in the households of our ancestors went by the name of "the covered dish."

Schmucke was unable to comprehend all this: Pons was too delicate to complain. But if there is one thing more distressing than genius misunderstood, it is a stomach not understood at all. The heart whose love is rebuffed (a drama, by the by, greatly overdone) rests upon a false want; for if the creature deserts us, we can at least love the creator; he still has treasures to bestow. But the stomach! Nothing can be compared to its sufferings; for after all, and before all, it is the seat of life! Pons regretted certain custards, true poems! certain white sauces, masterpieces! certain truffled chickens, paragons! but above all, those famous Rhine carp which can be found only in Paris, and with what condiments! Pons would sometimes cry aloud, "Oh, Sophia!" as his thoughts turned to the cook of the house of Popinot. A casual observer, hearing this cry, would have supposed that the good soul was thinking of his mistress, when in fact his mind was on something far more choice, — a fat carp, accompanied by a sauce which was clear in the sauce-boat, and thick on the tongue! — a sauce worthy of the *prix Montyon*! The remembrance of those eaten dinners made the poor victim of gastric nostalgia grow considerably thinner.

At the beginning of the fourth month, — that is, towards the end of January, 1845, — the young flute (who, like nearly all Germans, was called Wilhelm, and

Schwab to distinguish him from the other Wilhelms, — which, however, did not distinguish him from the other Schwabs) thought necessary to enlighten Schmucke on the condition of the leader of the orchestra, which had given rise to much comment at the theatre. It was the evening for the first performance of a piece in which the old German was to play some of his supernumerary instruments.

"That worthy old Pons is getting feeble; there's something out of tune in his bellows, — his eye is sad, the movement of his arm is shaky," said Wilhelm Schwab to his compatriot, pointing to the good soul as he climbed to his desk with a funereal air.

"At sixty years of age people are all like that," answered Schmucke in German.

Schmucke — like the mother in the "Chronicles of Canongate," who to keep her son twenty-four hours longer caused his execution — was capable of sacrificing Pons for the pleasure of dining with him every day.

"Everybody at the theatre is anxious about him," continued Wilhelm; "and, as Mademoiselle Héloïse Brisetout, our leading danseuse, says, he does n't even make a noise when he blows his nose!"

The old musician usually seemed to be blowing a horn when he blew his nose; for that long and capacious member resounded in his handkerchief, and the racket was a cause of frequent complaint from Madame de Marville to her Cousin Pons.

"I would give a great deal to amuse him," said Schmucke, "he is getting so melancholy."

"Look here!" cried Schwab. "Monsieur Pons always seems such a superior being to us poor devils

that I don't like to ask him to my wedding. I'm to be married — "

"How married?" demanded Schmucke.

"Oh! very properly," answered Wilhelm, — who thought Schmucke's queer question meant a jest, of which that perfect Christian was incapable.

"Come, gentlemen, take your places," said Pons, looking round the orchestra at his little army as he heard the director's bell.

They played the overture of the "Devil's Bride," — a fairy piece which ran through two hundred representations. Between the first two acts Wilhelm and Schmucke were left alone in the deserted orchestra. The atmosphere of the theatre was up to about thirty-two degrees Réaumur.

"Tell me about your marriage," said Schmucke.

"There! don't you see the young man in that proscenium box? Do you recognize him?"

"Nein — "

"Ah! that's because he has got yellow gloves, and shines with a glow of opulence; he is my friend, Fritz Brunner, of Frankfort-on-the-Main."

"He that used to come and sit in the orchestra beside you?"

"The very same. It is hard to believe in such a metamorphosis, is n't it?"

This hero of the promised tale was one of those Germans whose face contains the sombre mockery of the Mephistopheles of Goethe and the good-natured jollity of the novels of Auguste Lafontaine, of placid memory; cunning as well as simplicity, the hard eagerness of the counting-room and the deliberate *laisser-*

aller of a member of the Jockey Club; above all, the profound disgust of life which put a pistol into the hand of Werther, who was far more weary of the German princes than he was of Charlotte. It was a truly typical German face, with much shrewdness and much simplicity, showing stupidity as well as courage, a knowledge of life producing weariness, an experience that any childish fancy rendered fruitless, a constant abuse of beer and of tobacco, — but, as if to heighten the effect of all these antitheses, a devilish glance came from the handsome, tired blue eyes. Dressed with the elegance of a banker, Fritz Brunner presented to the gaze of the audience a bald head in the coloring of a Titian, on each side of which curled a small quantity of bright blond hair, which want and debauchery had left upon his head that he might have cause to pay a hairdresser when the day of his financial resuscitation came. His face, once fresh and handsome like the Christ of the great masters, had acquired certain sharp tones, which red moustachios and a tawny beard made almost sinister. The pure blue of his eyes had grown cloudy in his struggles with grief; the endless prostitutions of Paris had blurred the line of the lids and the contour of the eyes, where once a mother had seen with delight a divine reflection of her own. This premature philosopher, this youthful old man, was the product of a step-mother.

Here begins the singular history of a prodigal son of Frankfort-on-the-Main, — the most extraordinary and out-of-the-way affair that ever happened in that well-conducted, though central, town.

VIII.

IN WHICH WE SHALL SEE THAT PRODIGAL SONS ALWAYS END BY BECOMING BANKERS AND MILLIONNAIRES, PROVIDED THEY BELONG TO FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN.

Monsieur Gédéon Brunner, father of the present Fritz, one of those famous innkeepers of Frankfort-on-the-Main who practise, in collusion with the bankers of that town, the depredations authorized by law upon the pockets of tourists, an honest Calvinist to boot, had married a converted Jewess, to whose *dot* he owed the beginning of his fortune. The Jewess died, leaving a son Fritz then twelve years old, to the guardianship of his father, and under the special supervision of a maternal uncle, a furrier at Leipsic, — the head of the house of Virlaz & Co. Brunner the father was forced by this uncle, who was not as soft as his furs, to turn the lad's fortune into solid money and place it in the banking-house of Al-Sartchild, without using it. In revenge for this Jewish exaction, Père Brunner married again, alleging the impossibility of keeping his immense inn without the fostering eye and arm of a wife. He married the daughter of a brother innkeeper, considering her a pearl of price; but he had had no experience of what an only daughter, indulged by father and mother, could be. The second Madame Brunner was a speci-

men of what young German women become when they are frivolous and ill-tempered. She wasted her husband's fortune, and avenged the first Madame Brunner by making him in his own home the most wretched man to be found in the whole territory of the freetown of Frankfort, — where, they say, millionnaires are now procuring a municipal law to compel wives to cherish their husbands exclusively. This German dame loved the vinegar which her countrymen commonly call Rhine-wine; she loved the *article-Paris*; she loved to ride on horseback; she loved dress. In short, the only expensive things she did not love were women. She took an aversion to little Fritz, and would soon have driven him crazy, if that youthful product of Calvinism and the Mosaic dispensation, though cradled in Frankfort, had not been placed under the guardianship of the house of Virlaz at Leipsic; it must be added, however, that his uncle Virlaz, wrapped up in his furs, kept watch of nothing but the lad's silver marks, and left his nephew a prey to the step-mother.

This hyena of a woman was all the more savage against the cherubic son of the beautiful Madame Brunner, because, in spite of her efforts, she had no children of her own. Prompted by a diabolical idea, this evil-minded German woman drove young Fritz, when only twenty-one years of age, into a career of dissipation. She flattered herself that English horses, Rhine-vinegar, and the Margarets of Goethe would soon eat up the son of the Jewess and his fortune; for Uncle Virlaz had died and left the little Fritz a handsome property just at the time the latter attained his majority. But although the green baize of watering

places and the friends of the flowing bowl (among whom was Wilhelm Schwab) used up the capital of Virlaz, the prodigal son himself was kept alive by the will of God to serve as a warning to the young fry of Frankfort-on-the-Main, where all parents used him as a scarecrow to keep their sons well-conducted and submissive behind their iron counters, well lined as they were with silver dollars.

Instead of dying in the flower of his age, Fritz Brunner had the pleasure of burying his step-mother in one of those delightful cemeteries where the Germans, under pretence of honoring the dead, give loose to their frantic passion for horticulture. The second Madame Brunner died before the authors of her being. Old Brunner was so used up, — both in money, which she had extracted from his coffers, and by sufferings which she had made him endure, — that this luckless inn-keeper of herculean constitution, beheld, at the age of sixty-seven, his fine proportions shrunken as if the famous fish of the Borgias had gnawed him. Not to inherit the fortune of his wife after enduring her for ten years made the man another ruin of Heidelberg, — though restored from time to time by the bills of travellers, just as they restore the remains of Heidelberg to keep up the enthusiasm of tourists who rush to see the beautiful ruin so "wonderfully preserved." All Frankfort talked about Brunner as if he were a bankrupt, and people pointed at him with their fingers, saying to each other, —

"Just see to what condition a bad wife, whose property you can't inherit, and a bad son, brought up like a Frenchman, may bring us to!"

In Italy and in Germany Frenchmen bear the blame of all misfortunes, and are targets for every ball; "but the god pursuing his destiny" — for the rest see the ode of Lefranc de Pompignan.

The rage of the proprietor of the Grand Hôtel de Hollande was not wreaked merely upon travellers whose bills felt the weight of his anger: when his son was totally ruined, Gédéon, regarding him as the indirect cause of his misfortunes, refused him bread or water, salt, fire, lodging, or a pipe! — which in a German inn-keeping parent is the last degree of paternal malediction. The authorities of the place, not taking into account the original wrong-doing of the father, looked upon him as the most unhappy man in Frankfort-on-the Main, and accordingly came to his aid; they expelled Fritz from the territory of their Free-town, making German war upon him. Justice is neither more humane nor more intelligent in a Free-town than it is elsewhere, albeit that town is the seat of the German Diet. It is seldom that a magistrate reascends the stream of crimes and misfortunes, to find the pool from whence the first thread of water flowed. If Brunner forgot his son, the friends of the son imitated the father.

Ah! if this history could have been played before the foot-lights, before the eyes of this audience, among whom journalists, lions, and even a few Parisian women were inquiring from whence came the deeply tragic face of that German who had suddenly risen to the surface of the gay world of Paris, on the occasion of a first representation, alone, in a proscenium box — it would have been a far finer spectacle than the fairy play of the "Devil's Bride," though that was the two-

hundred thousandth representation of the sublime parable played in Mesopotamia three thousand years before Christ.

Fritz went on foot to Strasburg, and there he met with something which the prodigal son of the Bible did not find in the far country of sacred Scripture. Herein is revealed the superiority of Alsace, where beat those generous hearts that are born to show Germany the beauty and excellence of the fusion of French wit and intelligence with the more solid German qualities. Wilhelm Schwab, who had lately inherited the property of his father and mother, possessed at this time a hundred thousand francs. He opened his arms to Fritz, he opened his heart, he opened his house, he opened his purse. To describe the moment when Fritz, dusty, wretched, and quasi-leprous, received a piece of actual gold from the hand of a true friend on the other bank of the Rhine, would be to launch into an ode, and Pindar alone, in his own Greek, could pour it forth to humanity, — a lesson to revive expiring friendship. Put the names of Fritz and Wilhelm with those of Damon and Pythias, Castor and Pollux, Orestes and Pylades, Dubreuil and Pmejà, Pons and Schmucke, and all the fancy names which we give to the two friends of Monomotapa; for La Fontaine, man of genius that he was, made semblances of friendship, without body and without life. Add these new names to their compeers; and with all the more reason because Wilhelm ate his patrimony in company with Fritz, just as Fritz had formerly drunk up his fortune with Wilhelm; at the same time smoking, be it remarked, every known species of tobacco.

The two friends swallowed up this inheritance, strange to say, in the beer-gardens of Strasburg, in the stupidest, dullest, and most vulgar fashion, with ballet-girls of the Strasburg theatres, and Alsatians of easy virtue. Every morning they said to each other, "We must pull up, we must decide on a plan, and do something with the little that remains to us."

"Bah! one day more," Fritz would exclaim; "and to-morrow —"

Ah! to-morrow! In a spendthrift's life To-day is a great coxcomb, but To-morrow is a great coward, who takes fright at the courage of his predecessor. To-day is the braggadocio of ancient comedy; To-morrow is the Pierrot of our pantomimes. When the two friends reached their last thousand-franc note they took their places in a diligence which carried them to Paris, where they lodged under the eaves of the Hôtel du Rhin, rue de Mail, kept by one Graff, formerly head-waiter with Gédéon Brunner. Fritz got a place as clerk, at a salary of six hundred francs, with the Keller Brothers, to whom Graff recommended him. Graff, the proprietor of the Hôtel du Rhin is the brother of Graff the famous tailor. The tailor took Wilhelm as bookkeeper. Graff considered these places due to the two prodigals in return for his apprenticeship at the Brunner inn. These two facts — a ruined friend recognized by a rich friend, and a German hotel-keeper doing his best for two penniless compatriots — might lead some people to suppose that the present history is a novel; but truth is so like fiction, that fiction in these days takes unheard-of pains to look like truth.

Fritz, a clerk at six hundred francs, and Wilhelm,

bookkeeper at the same salary, soon found the difficulty of living in so enticing a city as Paris. Therefore, during the second year of their stay, in 1837, Wilhelm, who played the flute with some talent, got a place in the orchestra led by Pons, to earn occasional butter for his bread. As to Fritz, he could only eke out his salary by displaying the financial capacity of a descendant of the Virlaz. In spite of his assiduity, however, perhaps because of his very talents, the Fanc-fourtois only reached two thousand francs in 1843. Poverty, divine stepmother, did for the two young men what their own mothers had been unable to do: she taught them economy, the world, and life; she gave them the high and stern education which she drives like a spur into great men, who are all unhappy in their youth. Fritz and Wilhelm, being no more than ordinary mortals, did not give ear to all the lessons of Poverty: they battled against her coercions, they found her bosom hard, her arms fleshless; and they had no eyes to see, beneath her rags, that fairy Urgela who yields to the caresses of men of genius. Nevertheless, they learned the full value of money, and they pledged each other to cut its wings if ever again it crossed their threshold.

"Well, Papa Schmucke, I'll explain it all in two words," replied Wilhelm, who forthwith recounted in German and at great length the whole history. "Père Brunner is now dead. He was, unknown to his son or to Monsieur Graff, with whom we lodged, one of the first promoters of the Baden railroads, from which he realized enormous profits, and has left four

millions. I am playing the flute to-night for the last time. If this were not a first representation I should have left the theatre several days ago, but I did not wish to fail of my word."

"Very right, young man," said Schmucke, in his own language. "But whom are you to marry?"

"The daughter of Monsieur Graff, our host, the proprietor of the Hôtel du Rhin. I have loved Mademoiselle Émilie for seven years; she has read so many romantic novels that she has refused all offers for my sake, without any idea of what may come of it. This young lady will be very rich; she is the only heiress of the Graffs, those tailors in the rue Richelieu. Fritz gives me five times the sum we made ducks and drakes with at Strasburg, — five hundred thousand francs! He puts a million of francs into a banking-house, where Monsieur Graff, the tailor, will also put five hundred thousand; my bride's father allows me to invest the *dot*, which is two hundred and fifty thousand francs, in the same way, and he himself goes in as a sleeping partner for as much more. The house of Brunner, Schwab, & Co. will thus have a capital of two million five hundred thousand francs. Fritz has just bought shares to the amount of fifteen hundred thousand francs in the Bank of France, to guarantee our standing. It is not his whole fortune, for he has his father's houses in Frankfort, which are rated at a million; he has already rented the Grand Hôtel de Hollande to a cousin of the Graffs."

"You were looking rather gloomily at your friend," answered Schmucke; "are you uneasy about him?"

"I am uneasy, — anxious about his happiness," said

Wilhelm. "Look at him: is that the face of a contented man? I am afraid of Paris for him; I would like to see him do as I am doing. The old devils may be roused again. Of our pair of heads, his was never the best weighted. That evening dress, that opera-glass, all worry me. If you only knew how difficult it is to persuade Fritz to marry! He has a horror of what these French people call 'paying court' to a woman. We shall have to launch him into the family life suddenly, just as in England they launch a man into eternity."

During the excitement which breaks forth at the conclusion of all new pieces, the first flute gave his invitation to the leader of the orchestra. Pons accepted joyfully. Schmucke saw, for the first time in three months, a smile upon the face of his friend. He brought him home to the rue de Normandie in perfect silence; recognizing in that flash of joy the depth of the trouble that was gnawing into Pons. That a man so truly noble, so disinterested, so pure in feeling, should have such weaknesses! — this was what petrified the stoic Schmucke, and his heart grew sad; for he felt the necessity of renouncing the daily sight of his "goot Bons" sitting opposite to him at table; he knew it must be done for Pons's own sake, and he doubted if the sacrifice were possible. The thought drove him crazy.

The proud silence maintained by Pons, in his refuge on the Aventinus of the rue de Normandie, had of course been observed. Madame de Marville, being delivered from her parasite, concerned herself little about him; she thought, as did her charming daughter,

that the old man had discovered the trick played by the lovely Lili. Not so, however, with the president. Monsieur Camusot de Marville, a round, fat little man, had grown pompous since his advancement at court, admired Cicero, preferred the Opéra-Comique to the Italian opera, compared one actor with another, followed the crowd step by step, repeated as his own all the opinions of the ministerial journals, and in rendering judgment paraphrased the ideas of the last councillor who had spoken. This magistrate, whose traits of character were very well understood, and whose position obliged him to take a serious view of the affairs of life, was especially tenacious of family ties. Like most husbands who are ruled by their wives, the president asserted an independence in little things, which was respected by his wife. Though for as much as a month he accepted the empty reasons which Madame de Marville gave him to account for the disappearance of Pons, he ended by thinking it very strange that the old musician, a friend of forty years' standing, came no longer to the house, especially after making so important a gift as the fan of Madame de Pompadour. This fan, declared by Comte Popinot to be a rare masterpiece, won for Madame de Marville at the Tuileries, where the treasure was passed from hand to hand, a number of compliments, which flattered her vanity exceedingly; people extolled the beauties of the ten ivory sticks, each of which showed carvings of exquisite delicacy. A Russian lady (the Russians always think they are in Russia) offered Madame de Marville, in the drawing room of the Comtesse Popinot, six thousand francs for this

extraordinary fan, smiling to see it in such hands; for it was, we must admit, the fan of a duchess.

"It can't be denied that our poor cousin understands such foolish trifles," said Cécile to her father, the day after this offer was made.

"'Foolish trifles'!" exclaimed the president. "Why, the Government is about to give three hundred thousand francs for the collection of the late Monsieur du Sommerard, and to spend, in conjunction with the city of Paris, nearly a million in buying and repairing the Hôtel Cluny to hold the 'foolish trifles' you talk about. Those 'foolish trifles,' my dear child, are often the only evidence we have of departed civilizations. An Etruscan pot, a necklace, which are worth sometimes forty, sometimes fifty thousand francs, are 'foolish trifles' that reveal to our eyes the perfection of the arts at the time of the siege of Troy, and prove to us that the Etruscans were Trojans who had taken refuge in Italy."

Such was the fat little president's style of pleasantry; he usually took a tone of ponderous irony with his wife and daughter.

"The vast variety of knowledge which these 'foolish trifles' require, Cécile," he resumed, "is a science called archæology. Archæology comprises sculpture, painting, architecture, keramics, cabinet and ebony work (which is a wholly modern art), the goldsmith's trade, laces, tapestries, embroideries, in short, all the creations of human labor."

"Then Cousin Pons must be quite a learned man?" said Cécile.

"Bless me! why does n't he come here now?" demanded the president, with the air of a man roused to

a fact by the process of sundry smouldering thoughts suddenly striking home to his mind.

"He has probably taken offence at some trifle," said Madame de Marville. "Perhaps I was not grateful enough for the gift of the fan. I am, as you know, quite ignorant —"

"You! one of Servin's best pupils!" cried the president, — "*you* don't know Watteau!"

"I know David, Gérard, Gros, and Girodet and Guérin and Monsieur de Forbin and Turpin de Crissé."

"You ought to have —"

"Pray, what ought I to have done, monsieur?" said his wife, looking at him with the air of the Queen of Sheba.

"You ought to have known all about Watteau, my dear; he is very much the fashion," said the president, with a humility which denoted his many obligations to his wife.

This conversation took place a few days before the first representation of the "Devil's Bride," at which, as we have said, the whole orchestra was struck by the feeble health of the old leader. Before long, all the families accustomed to see Pons at their dinner-tables and to send him upon their errands made inquiries about him among themselves, and a great deal of uneasiness was felt in the circle where the good soul usually gravitated, which was not lessened by the fact that several persons saw him at his post in the theatre. Notwithstanding the pains with which Pons avoided his old friends when he met them, he at last came face to face with the late minister, Comte Popinot, at Monistrol's, — one of the daring and illustrious second-hand

dealers of the new boulevard Beaumarchais, mentioned by Pons to Madame de Marville, whose crafty enthusiasm for the business runs up the price of curiosities from day to day, because, as they say, such treasures are getting so rare that there will soon be no more of them.

"My dear Pons, why do we no longer see you?" said Comte Popinot. "We miss you very much, and Madame Popinot does not know what to make of this desertion."

"Monsieur le comte," replied the old man, "it was intimated to me, in the house of a relation, that at my age people are *de trop* in society. I have never been received with much courtesy, but at least I was never insulted. I have asked nothing of any one," he said, with the pride of an artist. "In return for civilities, I have often made myself useful to those who received me. But it appears that I have made a mistake. I am expected to fetch and carry at every one's beck and call, in return for the honor I receive in dining among my friends, my relations. Well! I have resigned my place of 'poor relation.' At home, every day, I have that which no table has offered me elsewhere, — a true friend."

These words, full of bitterness, which the old artist had the faculty still further to enforce by tone and gesture, so impressed the peer of France that he drew the worthy man aside and said to him, —

"My old friend, tell me what has happened. Confide to me who it is that has wounded you. You will allow me, I am sure, to point out to you that in my house no one has failed in paying you proper respect."

"You are the only exception that I make," said the poor man. "Besides, were it otherwise, you are a great lord, a statesman, and your occupations would excuse everything."

Pons, subjected to the diplomatic tact which Popinot had acquired in the manipulation of men and public business, ended by relating his ill-usage in the house of Monsieur Camusot de Marville. Popinot took up the victim's wrongs so warmly, that he went home and told the whole story to Madame Popinot, an excellent and worthy woman, who made certain representations to Madame de Marville the first time they met each other. The count himself said a few words to the president, and a family explanation ensued in the Camusot de Marville household. Though Camusot was not altogether master in his own home, his remonstrances were in this case too well founded on facts and justice not to compel his wife and daughter to recognize the truth of them; both admitted the wrong, but threw the blame upon the servants. The servants, called up and scolded, obtained their pardon only by full confessions, which proved to the president that Pons had had good reason to absent himself. Like the masters of all households ruled by the wives, Camusot displayed much marital and judicial dignity, declaring that all the servants should be sent away and should lose all the advantages their long services might deserve, if in future his Cousin Pons, and all others who did him the honor to come to his house, were not treated as he himself was treated. This last remark made Madeleine smile.

"You have but one chance for forgiveness," said the president, "and that is, to make your excuses to my cousin and ask his pardon. Go and tell him that your situation in my house depends entirely on him, and that I shall send you away if he cannot forgive you."

IX.

IN WHICH PONS PRESENTS TO MADAME DE MARVILLE AN ARTICLE FAR MORE PRECIOUS THAN A FAN.

THE next day the president went off at an early hour to pay a visit to his cousin before the sitting of the court. The apparition of Monsieur le président de Marville, ushered in by Madame Cibot, was an event. Pons, who received that honor for the first time, foresaw an apology.

"My dear cousin," said the president after the formal greeting was over, "I have at last learned the cause of your absence. Your conduct increases, if possible, the esteem I feel for you. I shall say but one word. My servants are dismissed. My wife and daughter are in despair; they wish to see you and to make you an explanation. In all this, my dear cousin, there is only one innocent person, and that is an old judge. Do not punish me for the thoughtlessness of a giddy young girl, whose heart was set on dining with the Popinots; above all, when I have come myself to make our peace with you, and to admit that all the fault is on our side. A friendship of thirty-six years, even supposing it changed, has still its rights. Come, sign a peace by dining with us to-night!"

Pons involved himself in a diffuse reply, and finally contrived to explain to his cousin that he was to be

present that evening at the marriage of a musician of his orchestra, who was about to discard his flute and become a banker.

"Well, then, to-morrow."

"My dear cousin, Madame la comtesse Popinot has done me the honor to send me a letter of such cordial invitation that—"

"The day after to-morrow, then."

"On that day the partner of my first flute, a German, a Monsieur Brunner, gives a return party to the bride and bridegroom."

"You are well worthy of such contention for the pleasure of receiving you," said the president. "Well, then, Sunday next,—a week's notice, as they say at the Palais."

"But that day we dine with Monsieur Graff, the flute's father-in-law."

"Then Saturday! Between now and then, you will have time to comfort a little girl who has shed many tears for her fault. God asks nothing but repentance, and you must not be more exacting with poor little Cécile than the Father of us all."

Pons, taken on his weak side, fell back into formulas that were more than polite, and accompanied the president to the very landing of the staircase. An hour later, all the servants made their appearance at his lodgings. They behaved after the manner of servants, and were cringing and wheedling; they even wept! Madeleine took Monsieur Pons apart, and threw herself at his feet.

"It was I, monsieur, who was the guilty party; and monsieur knows how I love him," she said, bursting

into tears. "It was revenge, which made my blood boil; and monsieur must lay the blame for all this miserable business to that. We shall lose our annuities! Monsieur, I was beside myself, and I cannot let my fellow-servants suffer for my folly. I see, now, that fate has not destined me for monsieur. I have grown reasonable; I see that I had too much ambition, — but I love you, monsieur. For ten years I have thought of no happiness but of making yours, — of taking care of you. What a noble fate! Oh! if monsieur only knew how I love him! Monsieur must have seen it in all my bad ways. If I died to-morrow, what do you think would be found? — my will drawn in your favor, monsieur, — yes, monsieur; it is put away in my trunk under my jewels."

By sounding this chord, Madeleine put the old bachelor through those enjoyments of vanity which come from the knowledge that we have inspired a passion, even though the passion itself is displeasing. After nobly forgiving Madeleine, he took the whole household back into favor, and promised to request his cousin Madame de Marville to keep them in her service. Pons felt with ineffable delight that he was restored to his habitual enjoyments without committing any mean or unworthy action. People had come to him; the dignity of his character would be enhanced. But when it came to explaining his triumph to his friend Schmucke, he saw with pain that his other self was sad, and full of unuttered doubts. Nevertheless, when the good German saw the sudden change in Pons's countenance, he ended by cheerfully sacrificing the happiness he had enjoyed of having his friend all to himself for nearly four months.

Moral maladies have one great advantage over physical maladies; they can be cured instantly, by the fulfilment of the desire the privation of which gave birth to them. Pons, after this morning, was no longer the same being. The sad and broken old man made way for the contented Pons, who had lately carried the fan of Madame de Pompadour to his cousin's wife. Schmucke, however, fell into long reveries over this transformation, without comprehending it; for genuine stoicism can never explain to itself French social subserviency. Pons was a true Frenchman of the Empire, in whom the gallantry of the last century was mingled with the devotion to women expressed in the celebrated ballad, "Partant pour la Syrie," and others. Schmucke buried his trouble in his heart under the flowers of German philosophy; but at the end of a week he had grown quite yellow, and Madame Cibot employed much artifice to get him to see the "doctor of the quarter." The physician feared an icterus, and left Madame Cibot convulsed with terror at the learned word, which merely means jaundice.

That evening, perhaps for the first time, the two friends dined out together. To Schmucke it was like a trip into Germany; for Johann Graff, the master of the Hôtel du Rhin, and his daughter Émilie, Wolfgang Graff the tailor, and his wife, Fritz Brunner and Wilhelm Schwab were all Germans. Pons and the notary were the only Frenchmen admitted to the banquet. The tailor and his wife, who owned a fine house in the rue de Richelieu between the rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs and the rue Villedo, had educated their niece; whose father feared, not without reason, to let her

come in contact with the people of all kinds who frequented his hotel. These worthy people, loving the child as if she were their own daughter, gave up their ground-floor to the young couple. There, too, the banking-house of Brunner, Schwab, and Co. was to be established. As these arrangements were made a month back, to give time for Brunner, the author of all this felicity, to come into possession of his inheritance, the suite of rooms of the wedded pair had been handsomely restored and refurnished by the famous tailor. The counting-rooms of the bank were placed in a wing which connected a magnificent warehouse with the old mansion standing between the court and garden.

As they walked from the rue de Normandie to the rue de Richelieu, Pons extracted from the absent-minded Schmucke the details of the story of the modern prodigal for whom Death had killed the fatted inn-keeper. Pons, just reconciled to his nearest relations, was speedily seized with the notion of marrying Fritz Brunner to Cécile de Marville. It so chanced that the notary of the brothers Graff was the son-in-law and successor of Cardot, having been assistant head-clerk in his office before succeeding to the business. They were all "relations" with whom Pons frequently dined.

"Ah! is that you, Monsieur Berthier?" said the old musician, extending his hand to his ex-amphitryon.

"Why don't you ever come and dine with us now?" asked the notary. "My wife was quite uneasy about you. We saw you at the first representation of the 'Devil's Bride,' and our uneasiness was turned into curiosity."

"Old men are sensitive," answered Pons. "They

have the misfortune of being a century behind the times. But how can they help it? Is n't it enough to represent that in which they were born? they can never belong to that in which they die."

"Ah!" said the notary, with a knowing air, "we can't keep pace with two centuries at the same time."

"Look here!" said the musician, drawing the young notary into a corner, "suppose you were to marry my cousin Cécile de Marville to —"

"Ah! why should I?" exclaimed the notary. "In this century, when luxury has got down to the porter's lodge, young men hesitate to couple their fate with that of a daughter of a judge in the Cour-royale, when he will only give her a *dot* of a hundred thousand francs. There is no such thing now-a-days as a woman who costs her husband less than three thousand francs a year; that is, in the class to which the husband of Mademoiselle de Marville must belong. The income of such a *dot* won't pay the costs of dress for such a wife. A young man, with fifteen or twenty thousand francs a year, lives in a pretty *entre-sol;* the world does n't expect him to make a splurge; he can live with one servant. He puts all his means into his pleasures; he has no proprieties to consider, except those his tailor takes charge of; courted by all the designing mothers, he is one of the kings of Parisian fashion. On the other hand, a wife must have an establishment. She wants a carriage of her own; if she goes to the theatre she must have a box, whereas a bachelor can take a stall. In short, she is the absorber of the fortune which the unmarried man formerly spent upon himself. Now, just think of a husband worth thirty thousand francs a

year. As the world is now, a rich bachelor, if he marries, becomes a poor devil who has to consider whether he can afford to go to Chantilly. Bring on the children, and poverty is felt at once. Now, as Monsieur and Madame de Marville are barely fifty, *expectations* have fifteen or twenty years to run; no man wants to carry them in his purse for that length of time; and let me tell you the gangrene of such calculation is so deep in the heart of the young rattle-pates who dance the polka with the lorettes at Mabille, that they all study both sides of the problem without needing a notary to explain matters. Between ourselves, Mademoiselle de Marville leaves a young fellow's heart too calm for his head to get turned, and all her pretenders have made these anti-matrimonial reflections. If some young man in the enjoyment of his reason and twenty thousand francs a year does appear on the horizon as a possible alliance, satisfactory to ambitious ideas, Mademoiselle de Marville has so little charm —"

"Why so?" asked the astonished musician.

"Ah! —" exclaimed the notary. "All young men, now-a-days, even if they are as ill-favored as you and I, my dear Pons, have the impertinence to require a *dot* of six hundred thousand francs, a well-born young woman, very handsome, very well brought up, without defects, — a paragon, in short."

"Then you think it will be very hard to marry my cousin?"

"She will stay unmarried just so long as her father and mother can't make up their minds to give her Marville for a portion. If they had chosen to do this, she would have been Vicomtesse Popinot by this time.

But here is Monsieur Brunner; now we must read the deed of association for the house of Brunner & Co. and the marriage contract."

As soon as the introductions and the compliments were over, Pons, invited by the parents to sign the contract, listened to the reading of the deeds, and then about half-past five o'clock the company proceeded to the dining-room. The dinner was one of those sumptuous repasts which the merchant classes give when they lay aside all thoughts of economy; in this case it testified to the relations which Graff of the Hôtel du Rhin held with the chief caterers of Paris. Never did Pons or Schmucke enjoy such fare. There were dishes that "beguiled the mind," — German *nudeln* of unspeakable delicacy, smelts incomparably fried; a *ferra* from Geneva with a true Genovese sauce, and a cream for the plum-pudding which would have astonished the famous doctor who, they say, invented it in London. It was ten o'clock before the company left the table. The amount of Rhine wine and French wine that was imbibed would amaze a dandy, for no one knows the quantity of liquid a German can absorb while sitting calm and tranquil. We must dine in Germany, and see the bottles coming on one after the other, like wave after wave flowing in upon the lovely shores of the Mediterranean, and disappearing as if Germans had the absorbing powers of sand or sponge; but all decorously, without French clatter. The talk remains as virtuous as the discourse of a usurer; the faces flush like those of a bridal couple in the frescos of Cornelius or Schnor, yet imperceptibly; and recollections rise, like the smoke of their pipes, slowly and deliberately.

Towards half-past ten Pons and Schmucke found themselves sitting on a bench in the garden on either side of their former flute, without knowing exactly how they got there, or what had led them to explain all the particulars of their characters, their opinions, and their misfortunes. In the midst of this jumble of disclosures Wilhelm told, with much vigor and vinous eloquence, how anxious he was to marry Fritz.

"What should you say to something like this for your friend Brunner?" cried Pons in Wilhelm's ear: "A charming young girl, sensible, twenty-four years of age, belonging to a highly distinguished family, — the father occupying a very high position as a magistrate, — a hundred thousand francs for a *dot*, and expectations of a million!"

"Stop!" cried Schwab. "I'll go and speak to Fritz about it at once."

And the two musicians saw Brunner and his friend promenading up and down before their eyes, listening alternately to each other's remarks. Pons — whose head felt rather heavy, and who, without being absolutely drunk, had as much lightness in his ideas as he had weight in the capsule that contained them — looked at Fritz through the diaphanous cloud exhaled by wine, and chose to see on his countenance the aspirations of married happiness. Schwab shortly brought up and presented to Monsieur Pons his friend and partner, who thanked the old gentleman cordially for the interest he deigned to take in him. A conversation followed, in which the two celibates — Pons and Schmucke — cried up marriage, and declared, without malicious meaning, that it was "the end of man." When the ices and

the tea and the punch and the cakes were served in the new appartement of the bride and bridegroom on the ground-floor, the hilarity of these worthy people — most of them drunk — rose to its highest pitch when they were informed by Schwab that the head-partner of the new banking-house was about to follow the example of his associate.

Schmucke and Pons returned home along the boulevard at two in the morning, philosophizing, till they cracked their brains, on the musical harmony of all things here below.

On the morrow Pons went to visit his cousin, Madame de Marville, full of the deepest joy at the thought of rendering good for evil. Poor, dear, noble soul! He did indeed attain to the sublime, as every one will agree because we are now living in an age when they give the Montyon prize to those who do their duty and follow the precepts of the gospel. "Ah! they will feel under immense obligations to their poor relation," he said to himself as he turned the corner of the rue de Choiseul.

A man less absorbed than Pons in his own satisfaction, — a man of the world, a suspicious man, would have taken note of the mother and daughter at his re-entrance into the house. But the poor musician was a mere child, an artist full of simple naïveté, unknowing of anything but moral excellence, just as he knew only the beautiful in art. He was delighted with the caresses which Madame de Marville and her daughter bestowed upon him. The worthy soul, who had seen vaudeville, drama, and comedy played for a dozen years before his eyes, was unable to perceive the grimaces of the social comedy, — to which, perhaps, he had become blunted.

Those who frequent Parisian salons, and who have already perceived the cold, dry harshness of body and soul in Madame de Marville, — eager only for honors, and enraged at her own virtue, — and who have felt her hypocritical piety and the haughtiness of a nature accustomed to control every one about her, can well imagine the hidden hatred she felt for her husband's cousin ever since the day when she put herself in the wrong. All her demonstrations of friendship, and those of her daughter, covered a formidable desire for revenge, evidently set aside for the time being. For the first time in her life Amélie de Marville had been openly to blame in the eyes of the husband over whom she domineered. Moreover, she was now compelled to appear cordial to the author of her defeat. There is no analogy to this condition of mind except in the rancorous hypocrisies which last for years in the sacred college of cardinals, or in the chapters of religious orders.

At three o'clock, the hour at which the president came back from the court-room, Pons had scarcely finished telling the marvellous tale of his acquaintance with Monsieur Frédéric Brunner, of the wedding-feast which lasted till morning, and all else concerning the aforesaid Brunner. Cécile had gone straight to the point by inquiring how Frédéric dressed, what sort of figure and style he had, and also the color of his hair and eyes; and when she had convinced herself that his appearance was distinguished, she admired the generosity of his character.

"To give five hundred thousand francs to a friend in misfortune! Oh, mamma, I shall have a carriage and a box at the opera!"

As for Madame de Marville, her thoughts were expressed in one sentence.

"My dear little girl, you may be married in a fortnight."

All mothers call their daughters "little girls" when they are twenty-three years old.

"But," said the president, "we must have time to make proper inquiries. I will never give my daughter for the asking."

"As for inquiries," remarked Pons, "Berthier drew up the deeds; and as to the young man himself, you remember what you told me, my dear cousin?" he added, turning to Madame de Marville. "Well, he is over forty, and half his head is bald. He wants to get a family haven from the storms of life; and I have not dissuaded him. All tastes are in human nature."

"All the more reason to see Monsieur Frédéric Brunner," said the president. "I don't wish to give my daughter to a valetudinarian."

"Well, my dear cousin," said Pons, still addressing Madame de Marville, "you can, if you like, see and judge of my aspirant; for, with your views, one interview will suffice."

Cécile and her mother made a gesture of delight.

"Frédéric, who is quite a distinguished amateur, has begged me to let him see my little collection," continued Cousin Pons. "You have never seen my pictures, my curiosities: come at the same time. You can appear as two ladies brought by my friend Schmucke; and you can make acquaintance with the intended without being compromised. Frédéric shall be kept in ignorance of who you are."

"A very good plan!" cried the president.

The consideration now shown to the despised parasite may be imagined. On that day the poor man was Madame de Marville's cousin; the happy mother, sinking her hatred under waves of joy, gave him looks and words and smiles which sent the worthy soul into an ecstasy at the thought of the good he was doing, and the future which he saw opening before him. Should he not find at the Brunners, the Schwabs, the Graffs, just such dinners as the one he had eaten the night before? He saw a land flowing with milk and honey, and a marvellous array of "covered dishes," gastronomic surprises, and exquisite wines.

"If our Cousin Pons brings about such a marriage," said the president to his wife, when Pons had departed, "we ought to give him an annuity equal to his salary as leader of the orchestra."

"Certainly," answered Madame de Marville.

Cécile was commissioned, in case she liked the young man, to make the musician accept this ignoble munificence.

The next day the president, anxious to have authentic proof of Monsieur Frédéric Brunner's property, went to see the notary. Berthier, informed of his coming by Madame de Marville, had sent for his new client Schwab, the ex-flute. Dazzled by such a distinguished alliance for his friend (Germans all value social distinctions, for in Germany a woman is called Mrs. General, Mrs. Councillor, Mrs. Advocate), Schwab was as fluent as a collector of bric-à-brac who thinks he is about to trick a dealer.

"Above all," said the father of Cécile to Brunner's

representative, "as I intend to give my daughter a deed of the estate of Marville, I wish to marry her under the dotal system. Monsieur Brunner must put a million of francs into land, to increase the Marville property, and make a real estate settlement which shall secure my daughter and her children from the uncertainties of a bank."

Berthier stroked his chin, thinking to himself "the president is doing it handsomely."

Schwab, after getting the dotal system fully explained to him, answered heartily for his friend. That clause pledged the very thing he had often heard Fritz desire, and secured him against ever falling back into poverty.

"There are at this moment about twelve hundred thousand francs' worth of farm and meadow lands for sale," said the president.

"A million of shares in the Bank of France will be quite sufficient to guarantee us," said Schwab. "Fritz does not wish to put more than two millions into the business; he will do what you wish, Monsieur le président."

The president made his womenkind almost frantic with delight when they heard his news. Never did so rich a capture fall so readily into the conjugal net.

"You shall be Madame Brunner de Marville," said the father to his daughter. "I shall get your husband to agree to add your name to his, and, later on, he can get letters of naturalization. If I become peer of France he shall succeed me."

Madame de Marville employed five days in preparing her daughter. On the day of the interview she dressed Cécile with her own hands, equipping her with as much care as the admiral of the blue bestowed upon the

armament of the Queen of England's pleasure-yacht when she started on her trip to Germany.

Pons and Schmucke, on their side, cleaned and dusted the museum, the whole appartement, and the furniture, with the agility of sailors swabbing the decks of an admiral's flag-ship. Not a speck of dust was left on the wood-carvings; all the brasses shone. The glass over the pastels was rubbed clear, and gave to view the works of Latour and Greuze, and Liautard, the illustrious painter of the Chocolate-girl, — the gem of this style of painting, whose beauty is, alas! so fugitive. The inimitable polish of the Florentine bronzes flashed its rays. The colored glass in the windows glowed with splendid color. Each treasure sparkled in its own place, and uttered its own note to the soul in this concert of masterpieces arranged by two musicians, the one as true a poet as the other.

X.

A GERMAN IDEA.

Clever enough to avoid an entrance upon the assembled company, the ladies arrived first and took possession of the ground. Pons presented Schmucke to his relations, in whose eyes the worthy German seemed an idiot. The two ignoramuses with their minds full of a bridegroom who was quadruply a millionnaire, paid very little attention to the art elucidations of Pons. They glanced with careless eyes at the enamels of Petitot, which were spread on the red-velvet ground of three marvellous frames. The flower-pieces of Van Huysum and David de Heim, the insects of Abraham Mignon, the Van Eycks, the Albert Dürers, the genuine Cranachs, the Giorgiones, Sebastian del Piombos, Backhuysens, Hobbemas, and Géricaults, — all those marvels of painting did not even prick their curiosity; they were waiting for the sun which was to light up this wealth. The beauty of certain Etruscan jewels and the actual value of the snuff-boxes did, however, surprise them, and they were expressing civil raptures over the Florentine bronzes when Madame Cibot announced Monsieur Brunner. The ladies refrained from turning round, but they took advantage of a superb Venice glass framed in a huge mass of carved ebony, to examine this phœnix of matrimonial aspirants.

Frédéric, warned by Wilhelm, had brushed together his few remaining hairs. He wore a becoming pair of trousers of a soft though dark shade, a silk waistcoat of supreme elegance and the newest cut, a shirt of the finest linen, hemstitched in Holland, and a blue cravat with white lines. His watch-chain came from Florent and Chanor, and so did the knob of his cane. As for his coat, Père Graff himself had cut it out of his best cloth; and a pair of *gants de suède* proclaimed the man who had already squandered the fortune of his mother. From the polish of his varnished boots it was easy to guess at the little coupé and pair of horses standing before the door, even if the ears of the two women had not already heard it rolling along the street.

When the rake of twenty is the chrysalis of a banker, he develops at forty into an observer, all the more keen because Brunner had learned the advantage a German can obtain by apparent simplicity. On this occasion, he put on the reflective air of a man who is making his choice between family life on the one hand and the dissipations of a bachelor on the other. Such an expression in a Gallicized German seemed to Cécile the very height of the romantic. She saw another Werther in the nephew of Virlaz. Where is the young girl who fails to make her own little romance out of the history of her marriage? Cécile thought herself the happiest of women when Brunner, examining the rare works of art collected through a period of forty years, grew very enthusiastic, and estimated them for the first time at their real value.

"He is a poet," thought Mademoiselle de Marville. "He imagines millions in these things."

Now, a poet is a man who does not calculate, who will leave his wife mistress of his fortune, — a man easy to lead, and to amuse with trifles.

Every pane of the two windows in the old man's room was of Swiss painted glass, the least valuable of which was worth a thousand francs; and there were sixteen of such treasures, which amateurs travel in search of now-a-days. In 1815 these panes cost from six to ten francs. The price of the sixty pictures contained in this rare collection, all of them pure masterpieces, never retouched and perfectly authentic, could not be ascertained except in the heat of competition. Inclosing each picture was a frame of immense value, showing specimens of every workmanship, — the Venetian frame, with its heavy ornamentation, like that of the present English silver-ware; the Roman frame, so remarkable for what artists call the *fla-fla;* the Spanish frame, with its bold leafage; the Flemish and German frames, with their naïve figures; the tortoise-shell frame, inlaid with pewter, brass, mother-of-pearl, and ivory; the ebony frame, the box-wood frame, the brass frame, the Louis XIII., Louis XIV., Louis XV., and Louis XVI. frames, — in short a unique collection of the finest models. Pons, more fortunate than the museums of Dresden and Vienna, possessed a frame made by the famous Brustholme, the Michael Angelo of wood-carving.

Mademoiselle de Marville, very naturally, asked for explanations about each new treasure. She made Brunner teach her to understand these marvels; and she was so artless in her exclamations, she appeared so delighted to hear from Frédéric about the value and

the beauty of the pictures, the carvings, and the bronzes, that the German thawed out, — his face became really youthful. In short, on both sides they went somewhat further than was intended at the first interview; especially one which was held to be accidental.

The meeting lasted three hours. Brunner offered his hand to Mademoiselle Cécile to assist her down the staircase. As she went down with judicious slowness, Cécile, still conversing on the fine arts, expressed her surprise at the enthusiasm of her admirer for the curios of her cousin Pons.

"Do you really think we have just seen a great deal of wealth?" she asked.

"Eh! mademoiselle, if your cousin would only sell me his collection, I would pay him to-night eight hundred thousand francs for it; and I should not be making a bad bargain. The pictures alone would bring more at a public sale."

"I believe it, if you tell me so," she answered; "and it must be true, because you care chiefly for such things."

"Oh, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Brunner, "my sole reply to that reproach is to beg Madame de Marville's permission to call upon her, for the happiness of seeing you again."

"How clever she is, the little thing!" thought Madame de Marville, who was following at the heels of her daughter. "With the greatest pleasure, monsieur," she said aloud. "I hope you will come with our Cousin Pons on Monday, at the dinner hour. My husband, the president, will be delighted to make your acquaintance. Thank you, cousin," she whispered, and she

pressed Pons's arm so significantly that the sacramental phrase "we are one for life and death" would scarcely have seemed to him more binding. She actually embraced him with the glance which accompanied the words, "Thank you, cousin."

After putting the young lady into the glass coach, and watching it till it disappeared round the corner of the rue Charlot, Brunner talked bric-à-brac to Pons, who talked marriage.

"So you don't see any objection?" said Pons.

"Ah!" replied Brunner, "the girl is insignificant, and the mother is rather sharp, — we 'll see about it."

"There 's a fine fortune to come," remarked Pons; "over a million."

"Next Monday, then!" repeated the millionnaire. "If you are willing to sell your collection, I am ready to give you five or six hundred thousand francs for it."

"Ah!" cried the old man, who did not know he was so rich. "But I could not part with what makes me happy. I could only sell my collection to be delivered after my death."

"Well, we will see about it."

"Two affairs on hand!" said Pons to himself, though he thought chiefly of the marriage.

Brunner bowed to Pons and disappeared, carried off by his elegant equipage. Pons watched the departure of the little coupé without noticing Rémonencq, who was smoking on his threshold.

The same evening Madame de Marville met all the Popinots at her father-in-law's, having gone to consult him on the subject of the marriage. In her desire to satisfy a small vengeance very natural to the heart of

mothers who have failed to capture a son and heir, Madame de Marville let it be known that Cécile was about to make a splendid marriage.

"Who is Cécile going to marry?" went from lip to lip; and Madame de Marville, not intending to betray herself, gave so many hints, whispered so many confidences (which were confirmed, be it said, by Madame Berthier), that on the morrow the tale took the following shape in the bourgeois empyrean, where Pons was once more accomplishing his gastronomic evolutions.

Cécile de Marville was about, they said, to marry a young German who had made himself a banker out of pure generosity, for he was worth four millions; he was a hero of romance, a perfect Werther, charming, kind-hearted, who had sown his wild oats and had fallen distractedly in love with Cécile. It was love at first sight, and all the more marked because when they met she was rivalled by all the painted madonnas collected by her cousin Pons, etc.

The succeeding day several persons called to congratulate the family, solely to find out if the golden goose really existed; thereupon Madame de Marville made a series of admirable variations on the theme, which mothers would do well to consult, as in former days they consulted the "Complete Letter-writer."

"No marriage is actually made," she said to Madame Chiffreville, "until we get back from the church and the *mairie;* and so far, the matter has scarcely gone beyond the preliminaries. I depend upon your friendship not to speak of our hopes."

"You are most fortunate, madame; marriages are very difficult to arrange, now-a-days."

"Ah! it was all done by accident; but marriages are often made in that way."

"So you are really going to marry Cécile?" said Madame Cardot.

"Yes," replied Madame de Marville, fully comprehending the spitefulness of the "really." "We are fastidious; and that has delayed Cécile's marriage. But at last we have found all we wanted, — fortune, amiability, good character, and good looks. My dear little girl deserves them all. Monsieur Brunner is a charming man, very distinguished; he loves luxury, he understands life, he adores Cécile and loves her sincerely; and therefore, in spite of his millions, she accepts him. We did not really expect so much, — but such advantages are not to be despised."

"It is not so much the fortune as the affection inspired by my daughter which has influenced us," she said to Madame Lebas. "Monsieur Brunner is in such hurry that he wants the marriage to take place without any legal delays."

"He is a stranger — "

"Yes, madame; and I frankly admit that I am glad of it. It is not so much a son-in-law as a son that I am getting in Monsieur Brunner. His delicacy is really delightful. You can't think with what readiness he agreed to marry under the dotal system. That is a great security for the family. He has bought twelve thousand francs' worth of meadow-lands around Marville."

Another day there were fresh variations on the same theme. Monsieur Brunner did everything in princely style; he never counted costs; if Monsieur de Marville

was able to obtain letters of naturalization for him (and the government clearly owed the president that little bit of patronage) he would in the end become a peer of France. The exact amount of his fortune was not known, but he had the finest horses and equipages in all Paris, etc.

The pleasure the Camusots took in proclaiming their hopes was proof enough that the triumph was unhoped for.

Immediately after the interview at Cousin Pons's, the president, prompted by his wife, invited the minister of justice, his colleague on the bench, and the *procureur-général* to dine with him on the day he was to receive this phœnix of sons-in-law. The three great men accepted the invitation, though it was given at short notice; for each understood the part the father of a family wanted them to play, and they readily came to his assistance. In France, people are always very willing to help the mother of a family in fishing for a rich son-in-law. The Comte and Comtesse Popinot also lent their presence to complete the glory of the occasion, although the invitation seemed to them in bad taste. There were, in all, eleven guests. Cécile's grandfather, old Monsieur Camusot, and his wife, were of course not absent from the dinner, which was intended, through the distinguished position of the guests, to definitely commit Monsieur Brunner, — announced, as we have seen, as one of the richest capitalists in all Germany, a man of great taste (for he loved the "little girl"), and the future rival of the Nucingens, Kellers, and du Tillets.

"It is our family day," said Madame de Marville, with well-studied simplicity, to the individual she looked

upon as her son-in-law, as she told him who the other guests were to be. "None but our intimates will be here. First, the father of my husband, who has been promised, as you know, a peerage; then Monsieur le comte and Madame la comtesse Popinot, whose son was not rich enough for Cécile, — but we are not the less good friends; the minister of justice, my husband's colleague on the bench, and the *procureur-général;* in short, all our friends. We shall be obliged to dine a little later than usual, because of the Chamber, which is never up till six o'clock."

Brunner looked significantly at Pons, and Pons rubbed his hands, as if to say, "Such are our friends — my friends!"

Madame de Marville, clever manager that she was, had something special to say to her cousin, so as to leave Cécile tête-à-tête for a moment with her Werther. Cécile chattered a good deal, and managed to let Frédéric see a German dictionary, a German grammar, and a Goethe, which she had hidden.

"Ah! you are studying German?" said Brunner, coloring.

None but a French woman lays such a trap.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "how malicious you are! It is not fair, monsieur, to spy into my secret places. I do wish to read Goethe in the original," she added; "I have studied German for the last two years."

"You must find the grammar very hard to understand; I see you have only cut ten pages," remarked Brunner, naïvely.

Cécile, confused, turned aside to conceal her blushes. A German never resists that sort of demonstration; he

took Cécile by the hand and looked at her, as the betrothed in the novels of Auguste Lafontaine, of modest memory, may have looked at each other.

"You are angelic!" he said.

Cécile made a coquettish little gesture, as if to say, "Ah, and you! — who would not love you?" Then she whispered in her mother's ear, as the latter returned with Pons, "Mamma, all goes well!"

The aspect of a family at such a crisis is not to be described. All the guests were glad to see a mother lay hold of a good match. They congratulated with ambiguous words and double-barrelled meaning first the lover, who pretended not to understand them, then Cécile, who understood everything, and also Madame de Marville, who went about collecting compliments. Every drop of Pons's blood rang in his ears, and he fancied he saw the footlights of his own theatre when Cécile, in a low voice and with ingenuous diffidence, told him of her father's intentions as to the annuity of twelve hundred francs, — a benefaction which the old artist positively declined, giving as a reason the revelation which Brunner had made to him of the real value of his collection.

The minister, the chief-justice, the *procureur-général*, and the Popinots departed, leaving none but old Monsieur Camusot, and Monsieur Cardot the former notary, assisted by his son-in-law Berthier. The worthy Pons, feeling that it was now a family party, thanked Monsieur and Madame de Marville very awkwardly for the offer which Cécile had just made to him. Simple-hearted being! such men are all alike, and follow their first impulse. Brunner, who saw a bribe in the offer, began,

like a true Israelite, to feel suspicious, and assumed a cold, reflective, calculating manner.

"My collection, or its value, will one day belong to your family, whether I sell it now to my friend Brunner or whether I keep it," said Pons, revealing to the astounded family that he possessed articles of great value.

Brunner observed the revulsion of feeling shown by these ignorant people towards a man who thus passed from a state of indigence to one of wealth, just as he had already observed the indulgent petting which the father and mother bestowed upon Cécile, the idol of their house; and he took a sudden fancy to excite the amazement and the exclamations of these respectable bourgeois to a still higher pitch. "I told Mademoiselle that the pictures of Monsieur Pons were worth a certain sum to me; but at the price now given for such unique works of art, no one can foresee how high the value of the collection might prove to be, if it were offered at public sale. The sixty pictures alone would bring a million. I saw several among them worth fifty thousand francs."

"It is a good thing to be your heir," said the former notary to Pons.

"My heir will be my cousin Cécile," said the worthy man, clinging to the relationship.

A murmur of admiration for the old musician ran through the room.

"She will be a rich heiress," said Cardot, laughing, as he took leave.

Old Camusot, the president and his wife, Cécile, Brunner, Pons, and Berthier were thus left together;

for it was supposed by all parties that the formal demand for the hand of Cécile would now be made; and no sooner were they left alone than Brunner put what the parents took to be a leading question.

"I am led to believe," said Brunner, addressing Madame de Marville, "that Mademoiselle is an only daughter?"

"Most certainly," she answered, with pride.

"You will find no difficulties whatever," said Pons, intending to bring Brunner at once to the point.

Brunner became thoughtful, and a fatal silence spread a cold chill through the room; if Madame de Marville had proclaimed her daughter an epileptic, the effect could not have been more extraordinary. The president, feeling that his daughter ought not to be present, made her a sign, which Cécile understood; she left the room. Brunner remained silent. The others looked at each other. The situation became embarrassing. Old Camusot, who was a man of experience, led the German into Madame de Marville's bedroom, under pretence of showing him the fan which Pons had discovered. Judging that some difficulty had arisen in Brunner's mind, he made a sign to his son and his daughter-in-law and Pons to leave them alone together.

"Here is the little masterpiece," said the old silk-mercer, displaying the fan.

"It is worth at least five thousand francs," said Brunner, after examining it.

"I think you came, monsieur, to ask the hand of my granddaughter?" said the future peer of France.

"Yes, monsieur," said Brunner; "and I beg you to believe that no alliance could be more flattering to me.

I shall never find a young lady more lovely, more amiable, and who would suit me better than Mademoiselle Cécile; but — "

"Ah, there must be no buts!" exclaimed old Camusot; "or, at least, let me know at once the reason of them, my dear sir."

"Monsieur," said Brunner, gravely, "I am very glad that no promises have been made on either side; for the fact of her being an only daughter — a fact so desirable for all men except myself, and of which I was in total ignorance — is to me an insuperable objection."

"Is it possible, monsieur," said the old man, dumbfounded, "that so great an advantage should seem to you a defect? Your conduct is most extraordinary, and I wish to know your reasons for it."

"Monsieur," said the German, stolidly, "I came here this evening with the intention of asking the president for his daughter's hand. I wished to offer Mademoiselle Cécile a brilliant future and so much of my fortune as she would deign to accept; but an only daughter is a spoiled child, whose parents have indulged her in having her own way, and who has never known opposition. I see here what I have seen in other families where they idolize this kind of divinity. Your granddaughter is not only the idol of the house; her mother, Madame de Marville, wears the — you know what I mean! Monsieur, I saw my father's home turned into a hell for just this reason. My stepmother, the cause of all my troubles, was an only daughter, idolized by her parents, the most charming of brides; and yet she became a devil incarnate. I have no doubt that Mademoiselle Cécile is an exception

to the rule; but I am no longer a young man; I am forty years old, — and this difference between our ages will occasion a separation of interests which will prevent me from making the happiness of any young lady who is accustomed to see her mother do as she likes, and to whom that mother listens as if to an oracle. What right have I to ask Mademoiselle Cécile to change all her habits and ideas for me? Instead of a father and mother indulgent to her smallest caprices, she would encounter the selfishness of a middle-aged man. If she resisted, the vanquished party would be the middle-aged man. I therefore behave like a man of honor; I withdraw. But I wish to take all the blame of this rupture upon myself; and if it is necessary to explain why I have only paid one visit here — "

"If these are your reasons, monsieur," said Monsieur Camusot, "however singular they may be, they are certainly plausible."

"Monsieur, do not doubt my sincerity," said Brunner, interrupting him eagerly. "If you will find me some poor girl, one of a large family of children, without fortune, — of which there are so many in France, — I will marry her, if her character is such as to justify my doing so."

During the silence which followed this speech Frédéric Brunner left the grandfather, went back into the salon, where he bowed politely to the father and mother, and withdrew. Cécile reappeared, a living commentary upon the escape of her Werther, and as pale as death; she had heard every word from her mother's wardrobe, where she had hid herself.

"Refused!" she whispered to her mother.

"And why?" demanded Madame de Marville, addressing the perplexed grandfather.

"On the fine pretence that an only child is sure to be a spoilt one," he answered. "And he is not altogether wrong," added the old man, seizing the occasion to cast blame upon his daughter-in-law, who had been a thorn in his side for the last twenty years.

"My daughter will die of it! — You have killed her!" said Madame de Marville to Pons, supporting Cécile, who thought it becoming to justify the words by sinking into her mother's arms.

The president and his wife carried Cécile to a sofa, where she finally fainted away. The grandfather rang for the servants.

XI.

PONS BURIED UNDER GRAVEL.

"I SEE the plot he has hatched," said the angry mother, pointing to Pons.

Pons started up as if the last trump were sounding in his ears.

"He was determined," continued Madame de Marville, whose eyes were like two fountains of green bile, "to repay a harmless joke by an insult. Who will ever believe that this German is in his right senses? Either he is the accomplice of an atrocious revenge, or he is crazy. I hope, Monsieur Pons, that in future you will spare us the annoyance of seeing you in this house, to which you have tried to bring shame and dishonor."

Pons, turned to stone, stood with his eyes on a pattern of the carpet, twirling his thumbs.

"What! are you still there? — monster of ingratitude!" cried the furious woman, turning round. "We are never at home, neither your master nor I," she added, addressing the servants, "when Monsieur Pons calls again. Go and fetch the doctor, Jean. And you, Madeleine, get some hartshorn."

To Madame de Marville's mind the reason alleged by Brunner was a mere pretext to hide some hidden motive; but the breaking off of the marriage was only the more certain. With the rapidity of thought which is

characteristic of women under extreme circumstances, she saw that the only way to repair the damage of such a defeat was to call it a premeditated vengeance on the part of Pons. This infernal scheme, if attributed to him, would redeem the honor of the family. True to her hatred of the old man, she turned a mere female suspicion into a fact. Women, as a general thing, have a particular creed and morality of their own; they believe in the truth of all that serves their interests and their passions. Madame de Marville went further still: she spent the evening in persuading the president to believe as she did; and by the next morning he was fully convinced of his cousin's guilt. Every one will think Madame de Marville's conduct horrible; yet many a mother would do the same under the like circumstances,—they would all rather sacrifice the honor of a stranger than that of a daughter. Methods may change, the intention will be the same.

The old musician left the house hastily; but his step was slow along the boulevards, and he entered the theatre mechanically. Between the acts he answered Schmucke in such a vague manner that the latter hid his fears, thinking that Pons was out of his mind. To a nature so childlike as that of Pons, the scene which had just occurred took the proportions of a catastrophe. To have roused such horrible hatred where he had meant to bestow happiness, was the total overthrow of his existence. He felt in the eyes, the gestures, the voice of Madame de Marville an implacable enmity.

The next day Madame Camusot de Marville reached a great determination, exacted by circumstances, and assented to by the president. They resolved to give

Cécile the Marville estate as a *dot*, with the hôtel in the rue de Hanovre, and a hundred thousand francs. In the course of the morning, Madame de Marville went to call on the Comtesse Popinot, perceiving plainly that the only way to cover up such a defeat was by an immediate marriage. She related the shocking vengeance and the frightful deception perpetrated by Pons. The story seemed plausible to the Popinots as soon as they heard that the reason given for the rupture was the singular objection to an only daughter. Madame de Marville dwelt on the brilliant advantage of being called Popinot de Marville, and the immense amount of the *dot*. Even at the price of land in Normandy, where it brings in only two per cent, the estate was worth about nine hundred thousand francs, and the hôtel in the rue de Hanovre was valued at two hundred and fifty thousand more. No reasonable family could decline such an alliance; the Comte and Comtesse Popinot accordingly accepted it. Then, as they were now concerned in the honor of the family into which they were about to marry, they promised their concurrence in explaining the catastrophe of the previous evening.

Soon after, at the house of the same old Camusot, grandfather of Cécile, and in presence of the same persons before whom, a few days earlier, Madame de Marville had chanted the Brunner-litany, the same woman, whom no one dared to contradict, bravely took the lead in explanations.

"Really, in these days," she said, "you can't take too many precautions in arranging a marriage, — above all, when you have to do with foreigners."

"Why so, madame?"

"What has happened?" inquired Madame Chiffreville.

"Did you not hear of our adventure with that Brunner, who had the audacity to aspire to Cécile? He turns out to be the son of a German eating-house keeper! the nephew of a man who sells rabbit-skins!"

"Is it possible? And you so cautious!" said a lady.

"These adventurers are so clever! But Berthier discovered the plot. This German has a friend, — a poor devil who plays the flute; he is connected with a man who keeps a common lodging-house in the rue de Mail, and with some tailors — actually tailors! We are told he has led a most debauched life, and that no fortune is safe in his hands. He has already squandered that of his mother."

"Mademoiselle would have been very unhappy," remarked Madame Berthier.

"How did you happen to meet him?" inquired old Madame Lebas.

"It was a piece of revenge on the part of Monsieur Pons. He introduced this fine friend of his simply to overwhelm us with ridicule. This Brunner (the name means 'fountain;' but he claimed to be a great lord) is in poor health, bald, and has bad teeth! To see him once was enough for me."

"But the great fortune which you mentioned?" said a young woman, timidly.

"The fortune is not as large as they said it was. The tailor, the lodging-house man, and Brunner himself have scraped together all they possess to start a banking-house. What is a banking-house when it first

starts? A mere opportunity for ruin! A woman who goes to bed a millionnaire may wake up reduced to live on her own *dot!* At the first look, the first word of the man, — who knows nothing of the customs of good society, — we made up our minds about him. You can see by his gloves, his very waistcoat, that he is nothing better than a workman, — the son of a German who keeps a low cook-shop, without honorable feelings, a beer-drinker, and who smokes — ah, madame, fancy! — twenty-five pipes a day! What a fate for my poor Lili! I still shudder at it! But God saved us. Moreover, Cécile did not like the man. How could we have suspected such a scheme on the part of a relation, a constant visitor at the house? — a man who has dined with us at least twice a week for twenty years, whom we have loaded with benefits, and who kept up the farce so audaciously that he actually announced before the keeper of the seals, the chief-justice, and the *procureur-général* that he meant to make Cécile his heir! This Brunner and Monsieur Pons were in league to make each other out worth millions. Ah, I assure you, ladies, that you would all of you have been taken in by this deception, — planned, as it was, by artists."

In a short time the united families of Popinot and Camusot and their adherents had won an easy victory before the world, — where no one took up the cudgels for poor Pons, the parasite, the dissembler, the miser; the false-hearted being, sunk beneath contempt, regarded as a viper, warmed in the bosom of families only to sting them; a man of extraordinary maliciousness, a dangerous buffoon to be forgotten as soon as possible.

A month after the rejection of the false Werther, poor Pons, leaving his bed, where he had been lying a prey to nervous fever, walked slowly along the boulevards in the sun, leaning upon the arm of his faithful Schmucke. People sitting on the boulevard du Temple no longer laughed at the two Nut-crackers, when they saw the decrepit gait of one and the touching solicitude shown by the other for his convalescent friend. By the time they reached the boulevard Poissonnière Pons had recovered a little color, as he breathed the atmosphere of the boulevards with its stimulating properties; for wherever a crowd congregates the air is so life-giving that even in the filthy Ghetto at Rome, swarming with Jews, malaria is never known. Perhaps, too, the sight of all that once gave him daily pleasure — the grand drama of Paris — may have had its effect upon the invalid's mind. In front of the Théâtre des Variétés Pons left Schmucke, with whom he had been walking arm in arm, except at moments when the convalescent quitted his friend to examine some novelty newly exhibited in a shop-window. He came suddenly face to face with Comte Popinot, and advanced to meet him with much respect; for the former minister was one of the men whom Pons chiefly esteemed and venerated.

"Monsieur," said the peer of France, severely, "I wonder you have so little tact as to bow to a person who is allied to the family you have attempted to cover with shame and mortification by a revenge which none but an artist could have concocted. Remember, monsieur, that from this day forth you and I are completely strangers to one another. Madame la comtesse Popinot

shares the indignation with which the world regards your conduct to the Marvilles."

The count passed on, leaving Pons struck down as if by lightning. Never do the passions of men, nor justice, nor political necessity, nor the great social forces of the world, consider the inward state of the being whom they strike. The statesman, driven by family interests to crush the poor old man, had not observed the physical weakness of that redoubtable enemy.

"Vat ees der madder, mein boor frent?" cried Schmucke, growing as pale as Pons himself.

"Another stab in the heart," said the old man, supporting himself on Schmucke's arm. "Perhaps none but the good God has the right to do good; and that's why those who meddle with his work are so cruelly punished."

This artist's sarcasm was a mighty effort on the part of the excellent creature, who wanted to chase away the terror he saw on his friend's face.

"I dink zo," answered Schmucke, simply.

The whole thing was incomprehensible to Pons, to whom neither the Camusots nor the Popinots had sent a *billet de faire part* of Cécile's marriage. On the boulevard des Italiens, Pons saw Monsieur Cardot coming towards him. Warned by the allocution of Comte Popinot, he took care not to stop a man with whom he formerly dined every fortnight, and merely bowed to him; but Cardot, a mayor and deputy, looked at him indignantly and did not return the salutation.

"Go and ask him what it is they have against me," said the old man to Schmucke, who knew the details of the catastrophe that had happened to Pons.

"Monsir," said Schmucke to Cardot, diplomatically, "my frent Bons ees regovering from an eelness, and zo, perhaps, you gan not regognize heem."

"I recognize him perfectly."

"Denn, vat haf you all accainst heems?"

"Your friend is a monster of ingratitude; if he recovers, it is because, as the proverb says, 'ill weeds live in spite of everything.' The world has good reason to distrust artists; they are as malicious and spiteful as monkeys. Your friend endeavored to degrade his own family and to destroy the reputation of a young girl, merely to revenge a harmless jest. I will not hold the slightest communication with him; I shall try to forget that I ever knew him, — that he even exists. These sentiments, monsieur, are those of my family, of his, and of all persons who formerly did monsieur the honor to receive him in their houses."

"Pud, monsir, you are ein reazonaple mann; zo vill you bermid me to egsblain der madder for you?"

"Remain his friend yourself, monsieur, if you can still find it in your heart to do so," answered Cardot; "but go no further, for I warn you that I shall include in the same condemnation all persons who attempt to justify his conduct."

"I gan joustivy heems!"

"His conduct is unjustifiable, indefensible."

The deputy of the Seine passed on without allowing himself to hear another word.

"The two legislative powers are against me," said poor Pons, smiling, when Schmucke related these savage denunciations.

"Eferyding ees accainst us," answered Schmucke,

mournfully. "Led us go home; zo vill ve meet no more vools."

It was the first time in his docile, lamb-like existence that Schmucke used such language. Never had his half-divine meekness been so ruffled. He would have smiled at any ill usage of himself, but to stand by and see it showered on his glorious Pons, — that unrecognized Aristides, that modest genius, that soul without bitterness, that treasure of loving-kindness, that heart of pure gold! He felt the wrath of an Alceste, and he called the detractors of Pons "fools." In his placid nature such emotion was equivalent to the mad furies of Roland. With wise precaution, Schmucke drew Pons toward the boulevard du Temple, and Pons allowed himself to be led, for the sick soul was in the condition of a wrestler who can no longer count the blows. Fate, however, willed that nothing within the range of his little world should be lacking to the calamity of the poor musician. The avalanche that rolled over him was to contain every element of destruction, — the chamber of peers, the chamber of deputies, relations, strangers, the strong, the weak, and the innocent!

As they returned along the boulevard Poisonnière, Pons saw the daughter of this same Monsieur Cardot, a young woman who had gone through enough trouble of her own to make her merciful. Guilty of misconduct supposed to be kept secret, she had since made herself the slave of her husband. She was the only lady in the houses where Pons dined whom he ventured to address by her Christian name: he called her "Félicie," and sometimes fancied that she really understood his nature. The gentle creature seemed annoyed at meeting her

Cousin Pons (the title was always given to him, although he held no real relationship to the family of the second wife of his cousin, old Camusot); but as it was now impossible to avoid him, Félicie Berthier stopped short before the miserable man.

"I did not think you wicked, cousin," she said, "but if a quarter of what I hear is true, you are a base man. Oh! don't defend yourself," she added, hastily, seeing that Pons made a gesture to that effect; "it is useless for two reasons: first, I have no right to accuse or to judge or to condemn any one, knowing by myself that those who seem most to blame have many excuses to offer; secondly, because your defence can do no good. Monsieur Berthier, who has drawn the marriage contract between Mademoiselle de Marville and the Vicomte Popinot, is so irritated against you that he would be very angry if he knew I had said a single word to you, though for the last time. Every one is against you."

"I see it only too well, madame," answered the poor old man in a broken voice, bowing respectfully to the notary's wife.

He resumed his painful walk, leaning so heavily on Schmucke's arm as to betray to the old German his physical faintness, though it was bravely controlled. This third encounter was like the judgment of the lamb lying at the feet of God. The wrath of that angel of the poor, that symbol of the peoples, shuts the portals of heaven. The two friends reached home without exchanging a word. In certain circumstances of life we can bear no more than to feel a friend at our side. Spoken consolation irritates the wound and reveals its depth. The

old pianist had, as we see, the genius of friendship, the delicacy of those who, having suffered, know the needs of suffering.

This walk was to be the last ever taken by the worthy Pons. He went from one illness to another. Naturally of a bilious-sanguine temperament, the bile now passed into his blood, and he was seized with violent inflammation of the liver. These successive attacks being the only illnesses of his life, he knew no doctor; and Madame Cibot, with an intention that was excellent in the first instance and even maternal, called in the doctor of the neighborhood. In every "quarter" of Paris there is a doctor whose name and residence are unknown to any but the lower classes. This physician, who takes care of the women in childbirth and bleeds the neighborhood, is to his profession what the servant-of-all-work is in domestic service. Compelled to be good to the poor, and sufficiently expert by reason of long practice, he is universally beloved. Doctor Poulain, brought to the sick man by Madame Cibot and recognized by Schmucke, listened, without much heed, to the complaints of the old musician, who had passed the night in scratching his skin, which had become insensible to the touch. The state of the eyes, suffused with yellow, was in keeping with this symptom.

"You have had some violent grief within a day or two?" said the doctor to his patient.

"Alas! yes," answered Pons.

"You have the disease which monsieur, here, only just escaped," said the doctor, pointing to Schmucke, "the jaundice. But it won't amount to anything," he added, writing a prescription.

In spite of these consoling words, the doctor gave the sick man one of those keen scientific glances in which the sentence of death, concealed by customary compassion, is guessed by those who are interested in knowing the truth. Madame Cibot darted an inquiring look into the physician's eyes, and was not misled by the tone of the professional words, nor by the deceptive expression of Doctor Poulain's face, and she followed him when he left the room.

"Do you really think it will be nothing?" she said to him on the landing.

"My dear Madame Cibot, your gentleman is a dead man; not because the bile has got into his blood, but because of a moral break-down. Still, with a great deal of care the patient may pull through. He must be taken away from here; he ought to travel —"

"And who 'll pay for it?" said the woman. "He has n't got no means but his salary; and his friend lives on a bit of an annuity some great ladies give him, — charitable ladies, to whom I dare say he did some service. They ain't nothing but babes, them two; I 've taken care of 'em for nine years."

"I have spent my life in seeing people die, not of their illnesses, but of that great and incurable disease, the want of money. There 's many a garret where, so far from getting paid for my visit, I am obliged to leave a five-franc piece on the table."

"Poor dear Monsieur Poulain!" said Madame Cibot. "Ah! if you 'd only got the income of some o' them skinflints in this very quarter, who ain't nothing better nor devils let loose, you 'd be the very image of the good God on earth."

The doctor, who owed to the good-will and confidence of the concierges of his arrondissement the little practice which scarcely sufficed to feed him, raised his eyes to heaven and thanked Madame Cibot with a grimace worthy of Tartufe.

"Then you think, dear Monsieur Poulain, that with a great deal o' care our dear patient may get over it?"

"Yes, if his moral system is not too much pulled down by his trouble."

"Poor man! what can have troubled him? There ain't no better man. He hain't got his equal on earth, except his friend, Monsieur Schmucke. I'll find out what's upset him; and I'll make 'em wince, whoever they be, that have worried my gentleman."

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot," said the doctor, after he reached the porte-cochère. "One of the chief symptons of the disease your gentleman has got is constant anxiety about mere nothings; and as it is not likely that he can afford a nurse, you will have to take care of him; therefore — "

"Is it of Monsieur Pons that you are speaking?" asked the dealer in old iron-work, who was smoking his pipe; and as he spoke he looked round his door-post to join in the conversation.

"Yes, Papa Rémonencq," replied Madame Cibot.

"Well, then! he is richer than Monsieur Monistrol himself," said the Auvergnat, "and all the other curiosity men. I know enough about the trade to tell you the dear man has got treasures."

"Goodness! I thought you were making fun of me the other day when I showed you them antiquities while my gentlemen were out," said Madame Cibot.

In Paris, where the pavements have ears and the doors a tongue and window-shutters eyes, there is nothing more dangerous than to talk in a porte-cochère. The last words exchanged there, like the postscript to a letter, often contain revelations as dangerous for those who let them be heard as for those who hear them. A single example will suffice to corroborate the case which presently appears in our history.

XII.

"L'OR EST UN CHIMÈRE." — WORDS BY SCRIBE, MUSIC BY MEYERBEER, SCENERY BY RÉMONENCQ.

ONE of the chief hair-dressers in the days of the Empire — a period at which men bestowed much care upon their heads — came early one morning out of a house where he had been dressing the hair of a pretty woman. In that house he had the custom of all the rich tenants; among them flourished an old bachelor, protected by a housekeeper who detested "her gentleman's" heirs. The ci-devant young man fell seriously ill, and a consultation of all the famous doctors (not as yet dubbed "princes of science") was called in. These doctors, leaving the house accidentally at the same time as the hair-dresser, and stopping to bid each other good-by at the front door, were talking truth and science with the freedom they display among themselves when the consultation farce is over.

"He is a dead man," said Doctor Haudry.

"He has n't a month to live," replied Desplein, "unless, indeed, by a miracle."

The hair-dresser heard the words. Like all hair-dressers he had an understanding with the servants. Impelled by iniquitous cupidity, he ran back to the old bachelor's appartement, and offered the housekeeper a large pre-

mium if she would persuade the sick man to invest the greater part of his fortune in an annuity. The chief item of the fortune of the dying man, who was fifty-six years old, and seemed nearly twice that age by reason of his dissipations, was a magnificent house in the rue Richelieu, worth at this time about two hundred and fifty thousand francs. This house, greatly coveted by the hair-dresser, was, through the persuasions of the housekeeper, made over to him for an annuity of thirty thousand francs. All this took place in 1806. The hair-dresser, long since retired from business, is now a man of seventy, and is still paying, in 1846, the annuity granted forty years ago. As the ci-devant young man is now ninety-six, quite childish, and married to his housekeeper, he may last some time longer. The hair-dresser, having paid the woman thirty thousand francs bonus, finds that this piece of landed property has cost him over a million. However, the house to-day is worth from eight to nine hundred thousand francs.

In imitation of the hair-dresser, Rémonencq had overheard the last words said by Brunner to Pons on the steps of his door, the day that phœnix-lover was presented to Cécile. He therefore longed to penetrate into the old man's museum. Rémonencq, who lived on good terms with Madame Cibot, was soon admitted into the appartement of the two friends while they were out of the way. Dazzled by such treasures, he saw a *coup à monter*, — which means in dealer's slang, a fortune to steal, — and he turned the project over and over in his mind for five or six days.

"I was n't joking," he said to Madame Cibot and the doctor. "Let us talk the matter over, and if the

good gentleman would like an annuity of fifty thousand francs, I 'll go a hamper of wine if you —"

"What are you dreaming of?" said the doctor to Rémonencq. "Fifty thousand francs annuity! Why, if the good man is as rich as that, and is doctored by me and cared for by Madame Cibot, he may get well; liver-complaints are the sign of a good constitution."

"Did I say fifty? Why, a gentleman, on those very steps that you are standing on, proposed to pay him a hundred and fifty thousand francs for the pictures alone, damn it!"

Hearing this assertion, Madame Cibot looked at the doctor with a strange expression; the devil lit up sinister fires in her orange-colored eyes.

"Come, come! don't listen to such idle tales," said the doctor, pleased to know that the patient could pay for his visits.

"Monsieur le docteur," said Rémonencq, "if my dear Madame Cibot would let me bring an expert to examine the articles now that the poor gentleman is in his bed, I'll pay the money down in two hours, — even if it comes to a hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"Well, well, my good friend!" said the doctor. "Madame Cibot, be sure not to contradict or annoy the poor man. You must be very patient; for everything will irritate and fatigue him, even your attentions. You must make up your mind that nothing will please him."

"That 'll be mighty hard on me!" she exclaimed.

"Come, listen to me," resumed the doctor, sternly. "The life of Monsieur Pons is in the hands of those

who take care of him; therefore I shall come and see him twice a day probably; I shall begin my rounds here."

The doctor had suddenly passed from the profound indifference he felt for the fate of his sick poor to a tender solicitude, as he recognized the possibility of the wealth so insisted upon by the speculator.

"He shall be nursed like a king!" cried Madame Cibot, with sham enthusiasm.

She waited till the doctor had turned the corner of the rue Charlot before continuing the conversation with Rémonencq. The man finished his pipe, with his back against the casing of his shop-door. He did not take the position accidentally; he wished to compel Madame Cibot to come to him.

The shop, once used as a café, remained just as it was when the Auvergnat first hired it. The words "Café de Normandie" were still to be read on the long sign which is placed above the window-panes in all modern shops. The Auvergnat had had the words "Rémonencq, dealer in old iron-work; buys second-hand merchandise," painted (probably for nothing) with a brush and some black paint, in the space which was left under the name "Café de Normandie." Of course, the mirrors, tables, chairs, sideboards, and all the furniture of the café had been removed. Rémonencq had hired, for six hundred francs, the dismantled shop, the back-shop, the kitchen and one bedroom above the ground-floor, where in former days only the waiter had slept, for the bedrooms belonging to the Café de Normandie were situated elsewhere. Of the primitive luxury once displayed by that establishment nothing

remained but a plain light-green paper on the walls of the shop, and the strong iron bars and bolts of the shop-window.

Rémonencq had come there after the Revolution of July in 1831, and had begun by displaying cracked bells, old pans, iron-work of all kinds, old scales, and weights now legally discarded by the law relating to the new weights and measures, — which by the bye the Government alone does not obey, for it still leaves among its copper coins the old one and two sous-pieces of the reign of Louis XVI. The Auvergnat, who was cleverer than any five of his compatriots put together, purchased sets of second-hand kitchen utensils, old frames, old brasses, chipped porcelains. Gradually, by dint of emptying and replenishing his stores, the shop had grown to look like the scene of a farce by Nicolet. The character of the merchandise improved; the dealer played the daring but sure game of doubling his venture at each remove; a game whose effect is plain to the eyes of all loungers sufficiently philosophical to study the progressive growth in value of the articles exhibited by these intelligent dealers. To ironmongery, earthenware, and tinware, succeed brasses, frames, and wood-carvings. After these come porcelains. Soon the shop, passing through an era of wretched pictures and rubbish, becomes a museum. At last the day dawns when the window-panes are cleaned, the interior is fitted up; the Auvergnat abandons his velveteen waistcoats and takes to wearing coats; he is seen to be a dragon mounting guard over real treasures; he is surrounded by masterpieces of all kinds; he has grown to be a keen connoisseur; he has increased his capital ten-

fold, and can no longer be taken in by others of his ilk, for he knows all the tricks of his trade. The monster is there, like an old woman surrounded by young girls whom she offers for sale. Beauty and miracles of art are nothing to this man, who is both coarse and cultivated, who calculates his profits, and sneers at all ignorance of art. Before long he takes to comedy; affects to love his pictures and his marquetry; feigns poverty, or invents a tale of cost-prices and offers to show the bills of sale. He becomes a Proteus; within the space of an hour he is Jocrisse, Janot, Merry-Andrew, Mondor, Harpagon, or Nicodemus, as it suits him.

After the second year, rare clocks, armor, and old pictures began to appear in Rémonencq's shop, which was kept during his many absences by his sister — a large and very ugly woman — who had come from Auvergne on foot at his request. This female Rémonencq — a species of idiot with a vague eye, dressed like a Japanese idol — never abated one penny of the price her brother instructed her to ask. She also took charge of the housekeeping, and solved the apparently insoluble problem of sustaining life on starvation commons. The pair lived on bread and herrings, trimmings from the markets, scraps of vegetables picked out of the waste stuff left by the hucksters in the corners of their premises. They allowed themselves twelve sous a day for their food, bread included, and the woman sewed or spun to earn them.

This development of business in the case of Rémonencq, who originally came to Paris as a messenger, and did errands from 1825 to 1831 for the curiosity-shops on the boulevard Beaumarchais and the coppersmiths of

the rue de Lappe, is the normal history of most of the bric-à-brac dealers of Paris. The four races chiefly employed in this trade — Jews, Normans, Auvergnats, and Savoyards — have each the same instincts, and make their fortune by the same means. Their code binds them to spend nothing, make small profits, and accumulate their profits and the interest of their profits; the code has now become a charter.

At this particular time Rémonencq, in conjunction with his old employer Monistrol, scoured the Banlieue of Paris — which, as we know, covers a radius of one hundred and twenty miles — in all directions for curiosities in their own line. After fourteen years of such traffic he had amassed sixty thousand francs and a shop full of treasures. He gained little in the shop itself, and only stayed in the rue de Normandie because the rent was low; but he sold his gatherings to the larger dealers, and was satisfied with a moderate profit. He transacted all his business in the Auvergne patois, called *charabia*. The man nourished a dream; he longed for a shop on the boulevards; he wished to be among the rich dealers in antiquities, and to come directly in contact with amateurs. He was cut out for a trader, and a formidable one. His face had a coating of the dust of iron-filings (for he did his work himself), which was glued to the skin by perspiration, and added to the inscrutability of his countenance, already endowed through the habit of physical endurance with the stoic impassability of the old soldiers of 1799. In person, Rémonencq was short and thin; and his little eyes, set in his head like those of a pig, revealed in each cold blue iris the concentrated greed and the crafty cunning of the Jews,

without their apparent humility, — which merely covers the profound contempt they feel for Christians.

The relations between Rémonencq and the Cibots were those of benefactor and beneficiaries. Madame Cibot, persuaded that the Auvergnats were very poor, let them buy the cold pieces of Cibot's and Schmucke's dinner for a mere nothing. The Rémonencqs paid two centimes and a half for a pound of dry crusts with a little crumb to them; the same for a pan of potatoes, and so forth. The crafty Rémonencq was supposed to do no business on his own account. He claimed to represent Monistrol, and declared he was a prey to the rich dealers; consequently the Cibots sincerely pitied the Rémonencqs. For eleven years the male Auvergnat had worn, and never worn out, the velveteen jacket, the velveteen trousers, and the velveteen waistcoat of his kind; but these garments, sacred to Auvergnats, were riddled with patches put in gratis by Cibot. All Jews, as we see, are not Israelites.

"Were n't you making fun of me, Rémonencq?" said Madame Cibot. "Could Monsieur Pons have such wealth and live the life he does? He has n't never a hundred francs in the house."

"People with hobbies are always like that," answered Rémonencq, sententiously.

"You don't believe, not really, that my monsieur has got seven hundred thousand francs?"

"Yes, he has, in the pictures alone. He 's got one I 'd pay him fifty thousand francs for, if it starved me to do it. You know those little brass frames, with the portraits on red velvet inside of them? Well, they are enamels by Petitot, and I know a monsieur in the

government — he was once a druggist — who pays a thousand francs apiece for such miniatures."

"There 's thirty of 'em in the two frames!" said his listener, her eyes dilating.

"Well, then, you can judge for yourself what treasures he 's got."

Madame Cibot's head swam, and she turned suddenly on her heel. At that moment she conceived the idea of worming herself into the old man's will, in imitation of those servant-mistresses whose annuities excited the envy and the cupidity of the whole Marais. Her imagination darted into the country about Paris; she saw herself in all her glory as the mistress of a country-house, where she should be waited on like a queen, and end her days taking care of her poultry-yard and her garden; Cibot too, poor man, who deserved happiness, like all neglected and misinterpreted angels.

Rémonencq saw a certainty of success in Madame Cibot's abrupt movement. As a *chineur* (such is the slang name for collectors of second-hand treasures, from the verb *chiner*, to go in quest of old things, and drive bargains with their ignorant possessors), — as a *chineur* the first difficulty is to get into houses. It is hard to imagine all the wiles à la Scapin, the tricks à la Sganarelle, the seductions à la Dorine, which these curiosity-hunters invent to worm themselves into the middle-class houses they desire to explore. It is a comedy worthy of any theatre, and is always based, as in this case, on the rapacity of servants. For thirty pieces of silver or a few wares, servants, and above all, those in the country or the provincial towns, will help the *chineur* to bargains which often bring him in a

thousand or two thousand francs. There is a certain service of old Sèvres, pâte tendre, whose capture, if related, would show as much diplomatic craft as the Congress of Munster, and all the cleverness displayed at Nimeguen, Utrecht, Ryswick, or Vienna, — which indeed is often surpassed by the *chineurs*, whose comedy is far more frank and unabashed than that of the diplomatists. These men have ways of action which dive as deeply into the depths of personal interest as those so laboriously sought after by ambassadors to break up the best cemented alliances.

"I've finely stirred up that woman Cibot," said the brother to the sister, as he returned to his seat on a broken straw-chair; "and I'm going to consult the only man who is up to such things, that Jew of ours, — a regular Jew, who won't touch a thing under fifteen per cent."

Rémonencq had read Madame Cibot's heart. In women of her stamp to will is to act; they stick at nothing to attain success; they go direct from the strictest integrity to the deepest villany. Honesty, like all other human sentiments, must be divided into two honesties, a positive and a negative honesty. The Cibots' honesty was negative; such people are upright so long as they meet with no opportunity to enrich themselves. Positive honesty is always up to its knees in temptation and never yields to it; take for instance that of a waiter who receives the payments at a café. A crowd of evil intentions rushed into Madame Cibot's heart and mind when the flood-gates of self-interest were set open by the devilish suggestions of her neighbor. She went up — flew up, to

speak accurately — from the lodge to the appartement of her two gentlemen, and presented herself, with a face of assumed tenderness, at the door of the room where Pons and Schmucke were lamenting. As he saw her enter, Schmucke made a sign that she should say nothing before the patient about the doctor's real opinion; for this friend, this devoted German, had read the truth in the doctor's eyes; Madame Cibot answered by a shake of her head, expressive of the deepest grief.

"Well, my dear gentleman, how do you feel?" she said, standing at the foot of the bed with her arms a-kimbo, and her eyes lovingly fixed upon the sick man: but what eyes! what spangles of gold flashed up in them! as terrible to an observer as the glance of a tiger.

"Very ill," answered poor Pons; "I have not the least appetite. Ah! what a thing the world is!" he cried, pressing the hand of Schmucke which held his own, as the good friend sat beside his pillow and talked with him, no doubt, about the causes of his illness. "How much better for me, my good Schmucke, if I had followed your advice! if I had dined here every day since our union! if I had renounced this world, which has rolled over me like a tumbrel over an egg, — and why!"

"Come, come, my good monsieur; don't be so gloomy," said Madame Cibot; "the doctor has told me the truth — "

Schmucke twitched her dress.

"And you 'll get over it with care, a deal o' care; so now, be easy. Have n't you got a good friend, — not to

speak o' me, — a woman as 'll nurse you like a mother nurses her first baby? I pulled Cibot through an illness when Monsieur Poulain said he could n't get well nohow and put the weights, as they say, on his eyes, and gave him up for dead. Now you ain't nigh so bad as that, thank God! not that you ain't pretty bad; but you trust me. I'll pull you through; you be easy, and don't fidget that way," she added, drawing the bedclothes over the patient's hands. "Don't you never worry; Monsieur Schmucke there, and I, we 'll sit up nights with you. You 'll be nursed better nor a prince; and besides, ain't you rich enough to have all you want? I've talked to Cibot, — poor dear man, what 'll he do without me! but I've made him listen to reason, for don't you see, we both love you, — and he 's given his consent that I should stay up here nights. Hey! that 's a mighty sacrifice for a man like him; I tell you he loves me as much as he did the first day! I don't know what ails him; it 's living in that bit of a lodge, where he 's always tied to my apron-strings. Here, don't uncover yourself like that," she cried, darting to the head of the bed, and pulling the bedclothes over Pons's chest; "if you don't behave pretty, and do all the doctor orders you — for that man 's the image of the good God on earth — I won't take care of you. You must obey me, you know."

"Yes, Matame Zipod, he vill opey you," answered Schmucke; "zo vill he, for his goot frent Schmucke, dry to lif. I gan bromise dat."

"And you must n't get impatient," went on Madame Cibot; "for your disease will make you enough so without your natural want o' patience getting no worse.

God sends us trouble, my dear, good monsieur, to punish us for our faults. Have n't you got no little faults to reproach yourself with?" The sick man shook his head. "Oh, don't tell fibs. Did n't you love no one when you were young? Were n't you never up to no mischief? Come, now, hain't you somewhere got a love-child that has n't got bread, nor fire, nor home? I know men! — monsters! — they love one day, and then, click! they don't think o' nothing, not so much as paying for a month's nursing. Poor women!"

"No one ever loved me but Schmucke and my poor mother," said Pons, sadly.

"Nonsense, you 're not a saint. Were n't you never young? You must have been a good-looking fellow once. At twenty, good as you are, I 'd have loved you!"

"I was always as ugly as a toad," said Pons, despondently.

"That 's all modesty; you may say that for yourself, you are modest."

"No, no, Madame Cibot; I tell you I was always ugly; no one ever loved me."

"I like that! you, indeed!" she persisted. "Try to make me believe you 're as innocent as a babe unborn! you a musician, a theatre-man! Why, if a woman told me so, I should n't believe her."

"Matame Zibod! you moost not irridade him," cried Schmucke, as he saw Pons writhing like a worm in his bed.

"Now, you hold your tongue! You 're both of you two old rakes. Suppose you ain't handsome, what o' that? There ain't no ugly cover that has n't its pot, as

the proverb says. Cibot made the handsomest oyster-woman in all Paris love him, and you are a deal better-looking nor he. You 're none too good. Pooh! you 've played your little games. And God's a-punishing you, like he did Abraham, for deserting your children."

Here the sick man found strength to make another gesture of denial.

"Don't you mind! it won't prevent your living to be as old as Mathusalem."

"Let me alone!" cried Pons. "I never knew what it was to be loved. I have got no children; I 'm alone upon earth."

"You don't really mean it?" said the woman eagerly. "You 're so good! and women, don't you know, love goodness; that 's what wins 'em: and so I thought in your best days you must have —"

"Take her away!" whispered Pons to Schmucke; "she worries me."

"Hain't Monsieur Schmucke got no children neither? Hey, you are all like that, you old bachelors!"

"I!" exclaimed Schmucke, springing to his feet.

"Come, come, you 'll say presently you have n't got no heirs neither! Did ye spring like mushrooms, now, out o' the ground?"

"Zilenze!" cried Schmucke; and with that the good German heroically seized Madame Cibot round the waist, and dragged her from the room in spite of her cries.

XIII.

TREATS OF THE OCCULT SCIENCES

"At your age to ill use a woman!" cried Madame Cibot, struggling in Schmucke's arms.

"Toan'd sgream!"

"You, the best of the two! Ha! I did wrong to talk o' love to old fellows; I put it into your head, monster that you are!" shrieked Madame Cibot, seeing that Schmucke's eyes sparkled with anger. "Help! help! I'm seized!"

"You are ein vool!" answered Schmucke. "Dell me, vat has de togdor zaid?"

"Why do you insult me?" cried Madame Cibot, sobbing, as soon as she was released. "I, who would go through fire and water for you! Ah! they say it takes a long time to find out what men are, — how true that is! My poor old Cibot would never use me so, not he! I, who behaved like a mother to you, for I hain't got no children, and as I was saying to Cibot, — yes, no later nor yesterday, — 'My friend,' said I, 'God knew what he was a-doing of when he would n't let us have no children, for I've got two babes upstairs.' There! by the soul of my mother! that's just what I did say to him."

"Vat has de togdor zaid?" demanded Schmucke furiously, and for the first time in his life he stamped his foot.

"Well, he said," answered Madame Cibot, drawing Schmucke into the dining-room, "he said our dearly beloved darling was going to die if he did n't have no proper care. But here I am, spite o' your ill usage; for you did ill use me, — you, whom I took to be so quiet. Is that the kind o' man you are? To go and insult a woman at your age, you old scoundrel!"

"Sgountrel! I! — toan'd you know I gan no one lof only Bons?"

"Well, that's all right; you'll let me alone, won't you?" she answered, smiling at him. "You'd better; for Cibot would break any man's bones who insulted his honor."

"Dake goot gare of heems, my littel Matame Zipod," returned Schmucke, trying to take Madame Cibot's hand.

"There! you're at it again!"

"Leesten to me; all I haf ees yours eef zo be as ve gan zafe heem."

"Well! I'll go to the apothecary's and get what's wanted; for you see, monsieur, this illness is going to cost a deal; and how will you manage that?"

"I vill vork. I eenzeest dat Bons moost be gared for laike a brinz."

"He shall be, my good Monsieur Schmucke, and don't you fret about nothing. Cibot and I, we've got two thousand francs laid by, — they are yours; it's a long time, I can tell you, since I've spent a penny of my own for you two."

"Goot greechur!" said Schmucke, wiping his eyes. "Vat a heart ze has!"

"Dry those tears that honor me; they are my reward!" cried the Cibot melodramatically. "There

ain't a more disinterested creature nor me. But don't you go in to Monsieur Pons with your eyes streaming; for if you do, he'll think he's worse nor what he is."

Schmucke, touched by this show of feeling, got hold at last of Madame Cibot's hand, and wrung it.

"Forgive me!" said the quondam oyster-woman, throwing Schmucke a tender glance.

"Bons," said the good soul, going back to his friend, "Matame Zipod ees ein anchel, — a jaddering anchel, pud ein anchel, all de zame."

"Do you think so? I have grown suspicious of every one this last month," said the sick man, shaking his head. "After such troubles as mine I can't believe in any one but God, — and you!"

"Ged pedder, and ve vill lif togedder laike keengs," cried Schmucke.

"Cibot," screamed his wife, out of breath, rushing into the porter's lodge. "Ah! my friend, our fortune is made! My two gentlemen have n't got no heirs, and no natural children, and no nothing. I'm going to Madame Fontaine to get her to tell our fortune on the cards, and say how much annuity we are to get."

"Wife," said the little man, "it's ill waiting for dead men's shoes."

"My gracious! are you going to plague me now?" she said, giving him a friendly tap. "I know what I know. Monsieur Poulain says Monsieur Pons is going to die! We shall be rich! I shall be put in the will, I'll take good care o' that! You stitch away here, — you won't be long at your trade now. We shall retire into the country, somewhere out there round

Batignolles; hey! a handsome house, and a fine garden! you'll like to take care of that, and I'll have a servant!"

"Well, neighbor, how are you getting on upstairs?" asked Rémonencq. "Have you found out what that collection is worth?"

"No, no, not yet. Can't get on as fast as all that, my good man. I began by finding out something much more important."

"More important!" cried Rémonencq; "why, what's more important?"

"Come, come, my lad, you let me sail the ship," said Madame Cibot, domineeringly.

"Well, but a fair percentage on a hundred thousand francs will make you live like a bourgeoise for the rest of your days."

"Don't you worry, Papa Rémonencq. When it is necessary to know what those things the old fellow has picked up are worth, I'll see about it."

And Madame Cibot, after going to the apothecary's to get the doctor's prescription made up, decided to put off her consultation with Madame Fontaine till the morrow, fancying that she should find the faculties of that oracle more crisp and fresh in the early morning before the clients arrived, — for there was often a crowd at Madame Fontaine's.

After being, for forty years, the rival of the celebrated Mademoiselle Lenormand, whom she survived, Madame Fontaine was at the present time the oracle of the Marais. Few persons have any idea of what such fortune-tellers are among the lower classes in Paris, or of the enormous influence they exercise over the decisions of

uneducated persons. Cooks, porters, kept mistresses, workpeople — all those whose lives are based on hopes — consult the privileged beings who possess the strange and inexplicable power of looking into futurity. The belief in occult science is far more widely spread than men of science, lawyers, notaries, doctors, magistrates, or philosophers, imagine. The masses have indestructible instincts. Among those instincts, the one so foolishly called *superstition* is as much in their blood as it is in the brains of superior persons. More than one French statesman consults these fortune-tellers. Judicial astrology (a grotesque conjunction of terms) is to the incredulous nothing more than speculation or traffic on an innate sentiment, perhaps the strongest of all in our nature, — curiosity. Such sceptics positively deny the relation that divination establishes between human destiny and the shaping of it which is obtained through the seven or eight principal methods that judicial astrology employs. But it is with occult science as it has been with so many natural phenomena ignored by freethinkers and materialistic philosophers, — that is to say, all those who hold exclusively to visible facts, solid results, the yieldings of the retort, or the scales of modern physics and chemistry. Occult science has nevertheless existed and continued to advance, though without making much progress, because for the last two centuries the finer minds have abandoned the study of it.

According to the matter-of-fact view of divination, to believe that the past events of a man's life and the secrets known only to himself can instantly be revealed on the cards which he shuffles and cuts, and which the reader of his horoscope divides, by some mysterious rule,

into various little heaps, is an absurdity. Yet steam was condemned as an absurdity; so is aërial navigation; so was the invention of gunpowder, the printing-press, spectacles, the art of engraving, and even the last great invention of the present day, the daguerreotype. If any one had gone to Napoleon and told him that a building or a man projects, at all moments and perpetually, an image upon the atmosphere, and that all existing objects have, within that atmosphere, a perceptible and obtainable spectre or shape, he would have promptly sent his informant to Charenton, just as Richelieu sent Salomon de Caux to Bicêtre, when that Norman martyr offered him the vast conquest of steam navigation. Nevertheless, that is what the discovery of Daguerre has proved to the world. Well, then, if God has, to certain clear-seeing eyes, imprinted the destiny of every man upon his physiognomy (meaning by that word the expression of his whole body), why should not the hand be an epitome of that physiognomy, inasmuch as it is in itself the whole of human action, and the sole means of its manifestation? Hence chiromancy. Society copies God. To predict the coming events of a man's life by the aspect of his hand, is a feat not at all more extraordinary in one who possesses the faculties of a Seer than it is for any of us to tell a soldier that he will fight, a lawyer that he will speak, a shoemaker that he will make shoes, a husbandman that he will manure the earth and till it. Let us take a striking instance. Genius is so visible in man, that the most ignorant of his fellows walking the streets of Paris recognizes a great artist as he passes along. He is like a spiritual sun whose rays light up all on whom they fall. Observe also that the deficien-

cies of an imbecile are revealed immediately by an inversion of the impression produced by genius. Commonplace men, on the other hand, pass almost unnoticed. Most observers of social and Parisian human nature can tell at a glance the profession of men who pass them in the street. In these days the mysteries of the witches' Sabbath, so fully pictured by the great masters of the sixteenth century, are mysteries no longer; the Egyptian sorcerers, male and female, progenitors of that strange race, the Gypsies of Bohemia, coming originally from India, simply made their votaries eat haschisch. The phenomena produced by that drug amply explain the broomsticks of the witches; their flights up the chimneys; the *real visions*, so to speak, of old women changed to young ones; the frenzied dances, and the entrancing music which filled the phantasmagoric dreams of those pretended worshippers of the Devil.

In these days so many authentic and established facts have come to light by means of the occult sciences, that before long those sciences will be taught just as we now teach chemistry and astronomy. It is surprising that at this moment in Paris where they are creating professorships of the Slav and Mantchoo and other futile literatures of the North, they have not revived, under the name of Anthropology, the teaching of occult philosophy, — one of the glories of the ancient University. In this respect, Germany, a nation so great and yet so childlike, has outrun France, for there they have revived this science, — a science far more useful than the various Philosophies which are, in point of fact, all the same thing.

That certain created beings should have the power of foreseeing events in the germ of causes, just as a great

inventor sees an art or a science in some natural phenomenon unobserved by the ordinary mind, is by no means one of those abnormal exceptions to the order of things that excite a clamor; it is simply the working of an obscure natural faculty, which is, in a measure, the somnambulism of the spirit. This proposition, on which every method of deciphering the future rests, may or may not be called absurd, — the fact remains. Observe also that for the Seer to predict the general events of the future is no greater exhibition of power than to reveal the secrets of the past. In the creed of the incredulous the past and the future are alike undiscoverable. If past events have left their traces, it is reasonable to infer that coming events have their roots. Whenever a soothsayer tells you, minutely, facts of your past life known to yourself alone, he can surely tell you the events which existing causes will produce. The moral world is cut out, so to speak, on the pattern of the natural world; the same effects will be found everywhere, with the differences proper to varied environments. Thus, just as the body is actually projected upon the atmosphere, and leaves within it the spectre which the daguerreotype seizes, so ideas, real and potential creations, imprint themselves upon what we must call the atmosphere of the spiritual world, produce effects upon it, remain there spectrally (it is necessary to coin words to express these unnamed phenomena); and hence, certain created beings endowed with rare faculties can clearly perceive these forms, or these traces of ideas.[1]

[1] Balzac here, as elsewhere, shows himself well grounded in doctrines now-a-days called theosophical, though they antedate theosophy by thousands of years. The phenomenon so lucidly described in the above

As to the means employed to obtain such *visions*, the marvel of them is readily explained as soon as the hand of the inquirer has arranged the objects by the aid of which he is to be shown the incidents of his life. All things are linked together in the phenomenal world. Every motion springs from a cause; every cause is a part of the Whole; consequently the whole exists in the slightest motion. Rabelais — the greatest mind in the humanity of modern times, a man who combined within himself Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Aristophanes, and Dante — declared, three centuries ago, that man was a microcosm; Swedenborg, the great Swedish prophet, said that the earth was man: the prophet and the precursor of scepticism met upon the ground of this greatest of all formulas. All things are predestined and foreknown in the life of man as in the life of his planet. The smallest chances and changes, even the most futile and insignificant, are under a law. Consequently, great events, great purposes, great thoughts, have their necessary reflex in lesser thoughts, lesser actions; and this law is so strict, that if some conspirator were to shuffle and cut a pack of cards, he would write, in so doing, the secrets of his conspiracy to be read by the Seer, otherwise called Bohemian, gypsy, fortune-teller, charlatan, etc. As soon as we admit necessity, that is to say, the connection of causes, judicial astrology will be seen to exist, and will become what it once was, a vast science; for it comprises that faculty of deduction which made Cuvier so great,

passage is that of the Astral Light. Desbairolles, in his remarkable book on Chiromancy, has much to say about Balzac's knowledge of occult science. — Tr.

using it, however, spontaneously, and not as that fine genius did, laboriously in studious hours with the midnight oil.

Judicial astrology, that is, divination, reigned for seven centuries; not as to-day over the masses, but over the loftiest minds, over sovereigns, over queens, over the wealthy. One of the greatest sciences of antiquity, animal magnetism, sprang from the occult sciences, just as chemistry issued from the retorts of the alchemists. Phrenology, physiognomics, and neurology were still other products of it; and the creators of those sciences (styled novel) made but one error, — an error common to all inventors, — that of generalizing from isolated facts whose generating cause still escapes analysis. In due time the Church, modern Philosophy, and Law joined hands to proscribe, persecute, and ridicule the mysteries of the Kabbala and its adepts; thence came a most unfortunate gap of a century in the supremacy and study of occult science. Nevertheless, the masses and many persons of intelligence, women especially, have continued to do homage to the mysterious power of those who are able to lift the veil of the future. They go to them to buy hope, courage, strength, — in other words, all that religion alone can give. So this science is still practised, though not without certain risks. Sorcerers of the present day, being safe from torture, thanks to the tolerance won by the encyclopedists of the eighteenth century, can now be arraigned only in the criminal police courts, and there, only in case they practise fraud, or terrify their clients for the purpose of extorting money, — offences which come under the charge of swindling. Unfortunately

such swindling, and even actual crimes, too often accompany the exercise of this sublime faculty. Let us explain the reason why.

The splendid gifts which make a Seer are usually found among those whom society calls "common, or unclean." These brutish beings are the chosen vessels in whom God has poured the elixirs which amaze humanity. Such beings have furnished the prophets, the Saint Peters, the hermits of history. Whenever thought can be kept to its integrity, rounded as it were within itself, when it is not frittered in conversation, or spent in schemes, in literary work, in the speculation of science, in administrative effort, in the conceptions of an inventor, in the service of war, it is apt to burn with repressed fires of prodigious intensity, just as the uncut diamond holds its rays within itself. Let the occasion come, and at once this spiritual force breaks out; it has wings to waft it over space, the eye divine that sees the all of existence: yesterday it was carbon; tomorrow, under the flow of the mysterious fluid which pervades it, it is a diamond of the purest water. Men of superior mind, with all the facets of their intellect well worn, can never exercise these supreme powers unless through miracles, which God occasionally permits. Thus it happens that necromancers and fortune-tellers, both male and female, are nearly always mendicants with untutored minds, beings apparently of coarse fibre, pebbles rolled over and over by the torrents of poverty, ground down in the ruts of existence, where they have exhausted only their physical endurance. The prophet, the seer, is Martin the laborer, who made Louis XVIII. tremble as he told him a secret

known only to the king; it is a Mademoiselle Lenormand, a cook like Madame Fontaine, some half-idiotic negro-woman, some herdsman living among his horned beasts, a fakir sitting on the bank of a pagoda, who by killing the flesh has won for the spirit the untold powers of somnambulic faculties. It is in Asia that the heroes of occult science have been found throughout all time.

It often happens that persons gifted with these powers who in their ordinary lives remain their ordinary selves, — for they fulfil as it were the same physical and chemical functions as the conducting medium of an electric current, sometimes mere inert metal, then again the channel of mysterious fluids, — these people, sinking back into their natural condition, betake themselves to practices and schemes which bring them into the police-courts; and even, as in the case of the famous Balthazar, to prison or the galleys. A proof of the enormous power which necromancy wields over the masses, is that the life or death of a poor musician depended on the horoscope which Madame Fontaine was about to draw for Madame Cibot.

Though certain repetitions are inevitable in so extensive a work, and one so laden with detail as a complete history of French society in the nineteenth century must necessarily be, it is useless to depict the den of Madame Fontaine, which has already been described in "Les Comédiens sans le savoir." It is necessary, however, to remark that Madame Cibot frequented Madame Fontaine, who lived in the rue Vieille-du-Temple, very much as the habitués of the Café Anglais go to breakfast at that establishment. Madame Cibot, a very old

customer, often carried in her train the young people and gossips of the neighborhood, enticed by curiosity.

The old servant who served as a marshal to the oracle, opened the door of the sanctuary without giving notice to her mistress.

"It is Madame Cibot! Come in," she added, "there 's no one here."

"Well, my dear, what has brought you so early?" said the sorceress.

Madame Fontaine, then sixty-eight years of age, deserved that title for her personal appearance, which was worthy of the Parcæ.

"I'm all upside down; give me the Grand Magic!" cried Madame Cibot; "my fortune is at stake."

And she forthwith explained the situation and demanded a prophecy on her sordid hopes.

"You do not know what the Grand Magic really is," said Madame Fontaine, solemnly.

"No, I hain't never been rich enough to play that game! A hundred francs! No, indeed! where do you suppose I could have got a hundred francs? But now! yes, to-day I want it!"

"I don't often try it, my dear," said Madame Fontaine. "I only give it to rich people on great occasions, and then they pay me twenty-five louis. The truth is, don't you see, it tires me, it wears me out. The Spirit shakes up my vitals — down there, in my stomach. It is like stirring the caldron, as they did in the olden time."

"But when I tell you, my good Ma'ame Fontaine, that my fortune depends on it!"

"Well, I owe you so many consultations — yes, I

will give myself up to the Spirit," answered Madame Fontaine, her withered face showing an expression of terror that was not simulated.

She left the dirty sofa, on which she had been sitting in the chimney-corner, and went to a table, covered with a green cloth so worn that the threads could be counted in it, on the left of which a toad of enormous dimensions lay asleep beside an open cage, which was inhabited by a black hen with ruffled feathers.

"Astaroth! here, my son!" said the old woman, giving a slight tap with a long knitting-needle on the back of the toad, which looked up at her intelligently. "And you, Mademoiselle Cleopatra! attention!" she added, giving another little tap on the beak of the old hen. Madame Fontaine then wrapped herself in meditation, remaining motionless for several minutes. She looked like a dead woman; her eyes were turned upward so that only the whites were seen. Suddenly she stiffened herself, and said in a cavernous voice: —

"I am here!"

Then, after automatically strewing some grain for Cleopatra, she took up the cards, shuffled them convulsively, and made Madame Cibot cut them, all the while sighing deeply. While this spectre of death in a dirty turban, wrapped in a sinister mantle, examined the grains of millet, and ordered her toad Astaroth to creep over the cards which were spread on the table, Madame Cibot felt cold chills running down her back, and shuddered. It is only great beliefs which give great emotions. To have or not to have an annuity — that was the question, as Shakspeare says.

XIV.

A CHARACTER OUT OF HOFFMAN.

At the end of seven or eight minutes, in the course of which the sorceress opened and read from a conjuring book in a sepulchral voice, and examined the grains of millet which the hen had left, and the track made by the toad as it crept away, she turned her livid eyes upon the cards, and expounded their meaning.

"You will succeed! though nothing will happen as you expect," she said. "You will have many steps to take, but you will gather the fruits of your labor. You will do great wrong: it will be with you as it is with all those who are near sick people and covet their wealth. You will be helped in your evil deeds by people of consequence. Later, you will repent in the agonies of death; for you will die, assassinated by two escaped convicts, — one, a small man with red hair, the other old and bald, — on account of the property which you will be supposed to have, in the village to which you will retire with your second husband. Go, my daughter; you are free to act, or to remain as you are."

The inward fire which lit the torches in the hollow eyes of the skeleton so dead and cold apparently, suddenly went out. No sooner was the horoscope pronounced than Madame Fontaine seemed dazed, and in all respects like a somnambulist when suddenly

awakened; she looked about her with a bewildered air, then she recognized Madame Cibot, and expressed surprise at the horror depicted on her face.

"What is it, my daughter?" she said, in a voice quite different from the one in which she had prophesied; "are you satisfied?"

Madame Cibot looked at the sorceress as if stupefied, and was unable to answer.

"Ah! you would have the Grand Magic! I treated you as an old acquaintance. Give me the hundred francs —"

"Cibot — to die!" cried her client.

"Have I told you dreadful things?" asked Madame Fontaine, quite simply.

"Why, yes!" said Madame Cibot, pulling the hundred francs from her pocket and putting them on a corner of the table. "To die! assassinated!"

"See there, now! you would have the Grand Magic! You need n't be troubled; all people who are killed by the cards don't die."

"But ain't it likely, Ma'ame Fontaine?"

"Ah! my good woman, I don't know anything about it myself! You would rap at the door of the future, and I pulled the cord, — that 's all, and *He* came."

"He? who is he?" asked Madame Cibot.

"Well! the Spirit, or whatever it is," replied the sorceress, impatiently.

"Good-by, Ma'ame Fontaine," cried her votary. "I did n't know what the Grand Magic was: you 've frightened me dreadfully, I can tell you."

"Madame does not put herself into that state twice

a month," said the servant-woman, following Madame Cibot to the landing. "She will die of it some day; it tires her so. Now she 'll eat some mutton-chops and sleep for three hours."

Once in the street, Madame Cibot did as inquirers after advice of all kinds invariably do: she believed in the prophecy so far as it was favorable to her wishes, and doubted the rest. The next day, confirmed in her resolutions, she thought only of finding some way of enriching herself by getting hold of a part of the Pons museum, and for a time her mind dwelt on no other thought. The phenomenon which we lately explained, — that of the concentration of moral force in common people, who never having wasted their intellectual faculties, like the educated classes, in daily activity, find those faculties in full strength and power at the moment when their minds become possessed of the formidable weapon called a fixed idea, — now appeared with great vigor in Madame Cibot. Just as a fixed idea can manage wonderful escapes and give rise to miracles of sentiment, this woman, urged by cupidity, became as powerful as a Nucingen at bay, and as ready-witted beneath her stupidity as the bewitching La Palférine.

A few days later, seeing Rémonencq opening his shutters about seven o'clock in the morning, she went up to him as stealthily as a cat.

"How shall I manage to find out the truth about the value of those things my gentlemen have scraped together?" she asked him.

"Oh! that 's easy enough," he replied in his horrible Auvergnat dialect, which for the clearness of this narrative we refrain from reproducing here. "If you 'll

deal fair with me I'll bring you an appraiser, a very honest man, who will know the value of those pictures to a penny."

"Who is that?"

"Monsieur Magus, a Jew, who only does business now for his own pleasure."

Élie Magus, too well known to the readers of the "Comedy of Human Life" to require a description here, had lately retired from the business of selling pictures and curiosities, in which as a merchant he followed the same system that Pons pursued as an amateur. The celebrated judges and appraisers, the late Henry, Messieurs Pigeot and Moret, Théret, Georges, and Roëhn, in fact all the experts of the Musée, were mere children compared to Élie Magus, who could discover a masterpiece under the dirt of ages, and who knew all the schools and the signature of all the painters.

This Jew, who came originally from Bordeaux, gave up his business in 1834, without, however, giving up the squalid appearance and habits which he retained, like the majority of the Jews, with the fidelity of the race to its traditions. Persecution compelled the Jews of the Middle Ages to go in rags, so as to disarm suspicion and have the right to complain and whine, and thus draw attention to their poverty. These compulsions of the olden time have produced, as always happens, a race-instinct, an endemic vice. Élie Magus, by dint of buying diamonds and reselling them, of selling pictures and laces, choice bric-à-brac, enamels, fine carvings, and old jewelry at second-hand, possessed an immense fortune of unknown amount, acquired in this business which has since grown so considerable. The number

of such dealers has increased tenfold within the last twenty years in Paris, where sooner or later all the curiosities of the world make their appearance. As for pictures, there are but three cities in which they can be said to be sold, — Rome, London, and Paris.

Élie Magus lived in the Chaussée des Minimes, a long, narrow street leading to the Place Royale, where he owned an old mansion, bought, as they say, for a song in 1831. This building contained one of the finest and most superbly decorated appartements of the Louis XV. period, for it was the old Hôtel de Maulaincourt. Built by the celebrated judge of the Cour des Aides, it escaped, thanks to its situation, the pillage of the Revolution. If the old Jew, contrary to the traditions of his race, came to the determination of owning it, we may be sure he had his reasons. The old man was ending his career, as we all end, by riding a hobby into a mania. Though as miserly by nature as his friend the late Gobseck, he allowed his admiration for the masterpieces he dealt in to get the better of his thrift; and his taste, becoming more and more refined and difficult to satisfy, had of late grown into the sort of passion which is only permissible to kings when they are rich and lovers of art. Like the second king of Prussia, who never praised a soldier unless the man were over six feet high, and who spent inordinate sums of money in adding to his live gallery of grenadiers, the old dealer grew enthusiastic over none but immaculate pictures, left as the hand of the master painted them, and of the highest order of execution. Élie Magus was never absent from the great sales; he visited all the picture marts, and travelled over the whole of Europe for that purpose.

His nature, bound down to lucre, cold as an iceberg, nevertheless grew impassioned at the sight of a masterpiece, — precisely as a libertine, weary of pleasure, grows eager at the sight of a perfect young girl, and devotes himself to a quest for beauty without defects. This Don Juan among pictures, this worshipper of the ideal, found greater enjoyment in such worship than the miser finds in the contemplation of his gold. He lived in a harem of beautiful pictures.

These masterpieces, lodged as the children of princes ought to be lodged, occupied the whole of the first floor of the old mansion, which Élie Magus had restored with the utmost splendor. Before the windows hung curtains of Venetian gold brocade; on the floors were the magnificent rugs of La Savonnerie, a royal manufactory of carpets at Chaillôt. The pictures, numbering about a hundred, were in the choicest frames, regilt with exquisite taste by the only gilder that Élie Magus considered conscientious, — by Servais, whom the old Jew taught to use English gilding, a leaf infinitely superior to that of the French gold-beaters. Servais is to the art of gilding what Thouvenin was to the art of binding, — an artist in love with his own work. The windows of this suite were protected by iron shutters. The master himself lived in two small rooms with attic roofs, on the second floor, poorly furnished, full of his ragged clothing and smelling of his race. He was ending his life just as he had lived it.

The ground-floor, wholly filled with pictures, which the Jew still continued to barter, and with cases arriving from foreign countries, contained also an immense atelier, where Moret (the best restorer of our day and a man

the Musée ought to employ) worked almost exclusively for Élie Magus. There too was the appartement of his daughter, the fruit of his old age, a Jewess as beautiful as all of her race when they show the Asiatic type in its purity and grandeur. Noémi, watched over by two fanatical Jewish servants, was guarded at the outposts by a Polish Jew named Abramko, who had been compromised under extraordinary circumstances during the Polish insurrection, and rescued by Élie Magus for purposes of self-interest. Abramko was the porter of the silent, gloomy, desolate house, and he lived in a lodge protected by three dogs of remarkable ferocity, — one a Newfoundland; another a Pyrenees hound; the third an English bull-dog.

Relying on such protection, the Jew was able to travel from home without fear, and sleep the sleep of the just, dreading no assault upon his daughter, who was his chief treasure, nor upon his pictures, nor yet upon his gold. Abramko was paid every year two hundred francs more than the preceding year, on the express understanding that he should have nothing at all at the death of his master, who was meantime training him to become the money-lender of the quarter. Abramko never admitted any one into the house until he had examined him through the formidable iron grating of the door. This Pole — a man of herculean strength — adored Élie Magus, just as Sancho Panza adored Don Quixote. The dogs, shut up during the day, were let out at night, and compelled by an astute arrangement of the old Jew to keep, each of them, to his appointed station, — one in the garden, at the foot of a pole at the top of which hung a piece of meat; the

second in the courtyard, at the foot of a similar pole; and the third in the great hall on the ground-floor. It is needless to remark that the dogs, who thus by instinct guarded the premises, were themselves guarded by hunger, and that the loveliest female of their race could not have enticed them away from those poles; no attractions whatever could have got them to leave that meat. If a stranger appeared, they thought he was after it; and it was only given to them in the morning when Abramko got up. This devilish sort of submission had one immense advantage: the dogs never barked. Élie's wit advanced them to the grade of savages, and they had each become as wily as a Mohican. On one occasion certain ill-disposed persons, misled by this silence, thought it would be easy to "crack" the Jew's stronghold. One of them, sent ahead to scale the wall of the garden, attempted to descend on the other side. The bull-dog let him alone, though he heard him perfectly, until the man's leg came within reach of his jaw, when he bit the foot off at the ankle and ate it up. The robber had the nerve to recross the wall, stepping on the bone of his leg, and fell fainting into the arms of his companions, who carried him off. This fact, when it appeared in the "Gazette des Tribunaux," which did not fail to report such a delightful episode of the Parisian night, was called a hoax.

Magus, at this time seventy-five years old, was quite likely to live to be a hundred. Rich as he was, he lived like Rémonencq. Three thousand francs defrayed all his expenses, including the luxuries he allowed his daughter. No existence was ever more methodical than his. He rose at daybreak, and ate a bit of bread

rubbed over with garlic, — a breakfast which sufficed him till the dinner-hour. The dinner, monastic in its frugality, was a family repast. From the time he got up until midday the old fanatic roamed about the rooms, which were adorned by his pictures. He dusted everything himself, both furniture and paintings, and admired all in turn, without any sense of weariness. Then he went downstairs to see his daughter, and drank his fill of paternal happiness. After that he started on his quests around Paris, — looked into all the auction-rooms, went to the exhibitions, etc. When he discovered some masterpiece which fulfilled all the requirements he deemed essential, the man's life seemed to take on new vigor: he had a bargain to make, a Marengo to win, and he laid scheme after scheme to get his new sultana at the lowest price. Magus had a map of Europe on which the locations of the great masterpieces were laid down; and he commissioned his co-religionists in all countries to watch every sale in his interests, under promise of a recompense. But what recompenses they were for such pains!

The two lost pictures of Raphael, so long and so persistently searched for by the Raphaelites, were in the possession of Élie Magus. He owned also the original of Giorgione's mistress, — the woman for whom the painter died, — and the other so-called originals are only copies of this glorious canvas, which in the old Jew's estimation was worth five hundred thousand francs. Magus also treasured the masterpiece of Titian, — "His Entombment;" a picture painted for Charles V., and sent by the great master to the great emperor with a letter written wholly in Titian's hand, which letter is

glued to the bottom of the canvas. He had, moreover, the original sketch by the same painter from which all the portraits of Philip II. were made. The ninety-seven other pictures were of the same calibre and distinction. Magus scorned our Musée, drenched as it is with sunlight, which makes havoc with the noblest pictures as it streams through the casements with the force of a lens. No picture-gallery is safe unless lighted from the ceiling. Magus opened and closed the blinds of his museum himself, and took as much care and as many precautions for his pictures as he did for his daughter, — his other idol. Ah, the old picture-maniac well knew the laws of painting! To his mind the masterpieces had a life of their own, their diurnal times and seasons; their beauty depended on the light which came at certain moments to tint them. He talked of them as the Dutch used to talk of their tulips; and he went to see such or such a picture at the hour when the splendor of its glory shone forth, if the weather were fine and clear.

In the midst of these still and silent pictures the little old man himself was a living picture as he stood there, — clothed in a shabby frock-coat, an antiquated silk waistcoat, a pair of dirty trousers, with his bald head, hollow cheeks, menacing pointed chin, and stubbly, straggling white beard; with his mouth empty of teeth, his bony, fleshless hands, his nose long and angular as an obelisk, his wrinkled, frigid skin, and his eyes keen as those of the dogs, — smiling at these glorious creations of genius. A Jew surrounded by his millions will always be one of the finest sights humanity can offer. Our great actor, Robert Médal, sublime as he is, has

never attained to the poetry of it. Paris is the first city in the world for its collection of such originals, — originals of a kind that have a worship in their hearts. The hobbyists of London end by growing disgusted with the objects of their adoration, just as they grow disgusted with life itself; whereas in Paris such monomaniacs live forever with their fancies in a happy concubinage of spirit. You will often meet such beings as Pons or Élie Magus, shabbily clothed, with their nose in the air, like that of the secretary in perpetuity of the French Academy, — seeming to care for nothing, to feel nothing; paying no attention to women or to the shops; wandering as it were hap-hazard, their pockets empty, their brains apparently still emptier, — and you ask yourself to what Parisian tribe such beings can belong. Well, those men are millionnaires, collectors, the most passionately devoted souls upon earth; people who are capable of putting themselves within the grasp of the law to get possession of a tazza, a painting, a choice treasure, — as in fact Élie Magus did on one occasion, in Germany.

Such was the great expert to whom Rémonencq took Madame Cibot with the utmost secrecy. The Auvergnat was in the habit of consulting the Jew whenever they chanced to meet on the boulevards. Magus, at various times, had made Abramko lend money to Rémonencq, whose honesty in such matters he could rely on. The Chaussée des Minimes being only a few steps from the rue de Normandie the accomplices were there in ten minutes.

"You are going to see," said Rémonencq, "the

wealthiest of all the famous curiosity-dealers; the greatest connoisseur there is in Paris."

Madame Cibot was therefore dumbfounded when she found herself in presence of a little old man, wrapped in a wadded great-coat, past darning even by the hand of Cibot, who was overlooking the work of his restorer, a painter employed in repairing pictures in a cold room on the vast ground-floor; then, catching a glance from his eyes, as full of cold malevolence as those of a cat, she trembled.

"What do you want, Rémonencq?" he said.

"It is about estimating some pictures," answered the Auvergnat. "There 's no one in Paris but you who can tell a poor coppersmith like me what he ought to give for them, when he has n't, as you have, millions to spend."

"Where are they?" said Élie Magus.

"Here is the concierge of the house where their owner lives; I 've arranged with her —"

"What is the owner's name?"

"Monsieur Pons," said Madame Cibot.

"I don't know him," said Magus, with an indifferent air, gently pressing his own foot against that of the restorer.

Moret, the restorer, who knew the value of Pons's collection, had suddenly looked up. The Jew's warning could only have been given under the eyes of such a pair as Rémonencq and Madame Cibot. But he had taken the moral measure of the woman by a glance of his eyes, which were as sure as the scales in which a money-changer weighs his gold. The pair were undoubtedly ignorant that Pons and Élie Magus had

often measured swords. In fact, those fierce amateurs were filled with envy of each other. The old Jew actually staggered for a moment. He had never hoped for a chance to penetrate that well-watched harem. The Pons collection alone could rival the Élie Magus collection. The Jew had followed twenty years later the same system as Pons; and in his capacity as amateur-dealer the Pons gallery had been as tightly closed against him as against the late Du Sommerard. Pons and Magus were both jealous at heart of all approach. Neither liked the celebrity which the owners of choice galleries usually court. To examine the magnificent collection of the poor musician was, for Élie Magus, as great a happiness as for a lover of women to slip into the boudoir of a beauty whom his friend sedulously hides from him.

The great respect shown by Rémonencq to this queer individual, and the prestige which all visible power bestows, made Madame Cibot obedient and complying. She lost the autocratic tone she was in the habit of using to the tenants and her "two gentlemen," accepted the terms proposed by Magus, and agreed to let him into the Musée-Pons that very day. It was leading the enemy into the heart of the fortress, plunging a knife into the bosom of Pons, who for the last ten years had strictly forbidden her to admit a soul, no matter who, inside the sacred portals, the key of which he carried on his person; and Madame Cibot had faithfully obeyed him so long as she shared the opinions of Schmucke on the subject of bric-à-brac. The fact was, that worthy German, when discoursing about those magnificent "pauples," and deploring the follies of

Pons, had inculcated in Madame Cibot's ample breast a profound contempt for all such antiquities, and had thus for a long time protected the Musée-Pons from invasion.

Now that Pons was confined to his bed, Schmucke did his friend's work at the theatre and in the schools. The poor German, who saw the sick man only in the morning and after he came home to dinner in the evening, endeavored to supply their domestic needs by doing their joint work and keeping together their whole clientèle; but all his strength was spent on the task, for his inward grief overpowered him. Noticing the sadness of the poor man, the pupils and the people at the theatre who knew about the illness of poor Pons asked for news of him, and the grief of the old musician was so genuine that he received, even from the careless and indifferent, that grimace of conventional sensibility which Paris bestows on the direst catastrophes. Schmucke suffered doubly, — in his own grief and in his friend's sufferings. He talked of Pons during half the time of each lesson, and interrupted his instructions so often to wonder how his friend was feeling, that the young pupils listened with real interest to his accounts of the old man's illness. He would rush to the rue de Normandie between two lessons, merely to see Pons for ten minutes. Alarmed at the emptiness of their common purse, and uneasy at the way Madame Cibot for the last fifteen days had been running up their expenses, the poor music-master nevertheless felt his inward anguish controlled by a courage of which he had never believed himself capable. For the first time in his life he was anxious to earn money, so that the home might want

for nothing. At times when some pupil, really touched by the trouble of the two friends, would ask Schmucke how he could bear to leave his friend so much alone, he answered with a sublime smile of ingenuous credulity, —

"Matemoizelle, he has Matame Zipod, — a drayzure! a bearl! Bons ees daken gare of laike a brinz."

So while Schmucke was trotting the streets, Madame Cibot was mistress of the appartement and of the patient. How could Pons, who had eaten nothing for fifteen days, and lay helpless on his back, and was lifted by Madame Cibot and placed on a sofa when she made his bed, — how could he watch his self-styled guardian angel?

Madame Cibot had made her visit to Élie Magus while Schmucke was eating his breakfast. She got home just as the German was bidding the sick man good-by. Since the revelation made to her of Pons's wealth she rarely left her old celibate, and brooded over him like a hen. She daily settled herself on a comfortable sofa at the foot of the bed, and diverted the patient's mind by telling him the sort of gossip such women excel in. She grew coaxing, gentle, watchful, careful for his comfort, and wormed herself into the old man's thoughts with a cleverness that was truly Machiavellian, as we shall presently have occasion to see.

XV.

THE CACKLE AND SCHEMES OF AN OLD WOMAN.

Much alarmed by the prediction of the oracle's Grand Magic, Madame Cibot had sworn to herself that she would succeed in her plans by none but gentle means, and get into "her gentleman's" will only by evil-doings that should be strictly moral. Her ten years' ignorance of the value of the Pons Museum were just so many years of disinterested devotion and integrity in hand; and she now proposed to draw upon that magnificent capital. Since the day when Rémonencq, with a golden word, had hatched a serpent hidden in its shell for over twenty-five years in the heart of this woman, — namely, the desire for riches, — she had nourished the viper on the poisonous leaven which lies like a sediment at the bottom of such hearts: we shall now see how she executed the advice which the serpent hissed into her ear.

"Well, has he taken his drink, the dear cherub; is he better?" she said to Schmucke.

"No pedder! my tear Matame Zipod, no pedder!" answered the German, wiping away a tear.

"Pooh! you must n't never get so frightened, my dear monsieur; take it easy. If Cibot lay at the point of death, I could n't be no sorrier nor you. There, there! our dear cherub has got a good constitution. And then, don't you see, he seems to have lived virtuous. You never know how long virtuous folks can last! He

is very ill, that's true; but with all the care I give him I'll pull him through. You be easy, and go about your work; I'll keep him company, and see that he drinks his pints o' barley-water."

"Pud for you, I moost tie of anchziety," said Schmucke, pressing the hand of his good housekeeper in both his own, with a look full of confidence.

Madame Cibot entered the sick man's bedroom wiping her eyes.

"What is the matter, Madame Cibot?" asked Pons.

"Monsieur Schmucke has just stuck a knife in my heart; he 's crying over you as if you were dead!" she answered. "Though you are pretty bad, you are not bad enough to be cried over; but I've got such a tender heart! My goodness! what a fool I am to love people like that, and to care more for you than I do for Cibot. After all, you ain't nothing to me; we ain't related, except through the first woman; and yet, on my word of honor, here am I all harrowed up as soon as anything 's the matter with you. I 'd cut my hand off — the left one, of course — here, this minute, if I could see you getting about again, eating your meals and filibustering with them dealers, like you used to. If I'd had a child I think I should love it just as I love you, that I should! Come, take your drink, my darling, — here, drink it all down! Won't you? do as I tell you, now! Did n't the doctor say, 'If Monsieur Pons don't want to go to Père-la-Chaise, he must drink every day as many pailsful o' water as an Auvergnat sells'? Come, come, you must drink!"

"But I do drink, my good Cibot! so much, so much, that my stomach is half a-float," murmured Pons.

"There, that 's right," said his nurse, putting down the empty glass. "You will save your life that way. Monsieur Poulain said he had a patient like you, who had n't never no nursing; his children abandoned him, and he died of this very disease just because he would n't drink nothing! So you must drink, don't you see, my lamb! — they only buried him two months ago. If you die, you 'll carry off with you that good Schmucke — why, he 's like a child, he is. Ah, don't he love you, that dear lamb of a man! No, there ain't no woman ever loved a man like that! He can't eat nor drink, and he 's grown so thin the last fifteen days that he ain't no more nor a bag o' bones like you. — Why, it makes me jealous; for I love you too: but I have n't come to that pass yet — I hain't lost my appetite, on the contrary; and what with running up and down stairs my legs get so tired I just fling myself down at night like a lump o' lead. I declare I neglect my poor Cibot so that Mademoiselle Rémonencq has to get him his victuals, and he blows me up because they 're bad. As for that, I tell him, we should all learn how to suffer for others, and that you are a deal too ill for me to leave you; you can't do without a nurse, and I shan't have no strange nurse here — I! who have taken care of you and your affairs for nigh ten years! I know what hired nurses are! they eat enough for ten, and they want their wine and their sugar and their warming-pans and their easy times; and then, goodness, how they rob a sick man if he don't put 'em in his will! Get a nurse in here for a day, and to-morrow you 'll miss a picture, or some curiosity or other — "

"Oh, Madame Cibot!" cried Pons, beside himself at

the idea, "don't leave me! don't let anybody touch anything!"

"I am here," she answered. "As long as I have the strength, I'll be here; make yourself easy! Monsieur Poulain, who maybe had an eye to your treasures, did n't he want me to get you a nurse though? But I just snuffed him out. 'There ain't no one but me,' I said to him, 'that monsieur likes; he knows my ways, and I know his.' He held his tongue then, and I said, 'As for nurses, they are all thieves! I hate them kind o' women;' and said he, 'Yes, they are full o' schemes: there was once an old gentleman,' — observe now, it was the doctor said this, — 'and a Madame Sabatier, a woman thirty-six years old, who used to sell slippers at the Palais,' — you know the row of shops they pulled down at the Palais?"

Pons made a sign in the affirmative.

"Well, that woman never got on. Her man would drink; and they say he died at last of spontaneous combustion. She was a handsome woman; but if the truth must be told, even that did n't profit her, though she had lawyers among her friends. So when she came to the last crust she went out nursing women in childbed, and lived when at home in the rue Barre-du-Bec. One time she went to nurse an old gentleman who had (saving your presence!) a disease o' the kidneys, and they tapped him like an artesian well; and that took such a deal o' care, she had to sleep on a flock-bed in the gentleman's room. That 's easily believable. But you will tell me 'men don't respect nothing; they are all selfish.' Well, now, you see, she was always there, talking to him and cheering him up. She told him

stories and got him to talk, just as we are now — ain't we? — chattering to each other; and she found out that his nephews (for he had some nephews) were perfect monsters; they had made him very unhappy; and, to cut a long story short, he was just dying of the illness those nephews caused. Well, now, my dear monsieur, she saved his life, and then he married her; and they 've got a splendid child. Madame Bordevin, that keeps the butcher's shop corner of the rue Charlot, is her relation, and she was the godmother. Eh, that was a piece of luck! I 'm married, that 's true; but I hain't got no children; and I may say this, that it 's Cibot's fault. Enough! But what should we ever have done, Cibot and I, with a family, when we have n't got a sixpence laid by after thirty years of honest dealings? Think of that, my good monsieur! What comforts me is that I 've never taken a farthing of other folks' property, — *never* did I wrong any one! Now, just suppose that in six weeks you are on your pins again, sauntering along the boulevard, and that you 'd put me, let 's say, in your will; well, now, I should n't have no peace till I 'd found up your heirs to give it back to 'em. I 'm afraid o' money that I don't earn by the sweat o' my brow. People might say to me, 'Ma'ame Cibot, you need n't feel that way, for you 've fairly earned it. You took care o' those gentlemen as if they were your own babes; you must have saved them a thousand francs a year.' In my place, don't you see, monsieur, there 's many cooks that has got ten thousand francs snugly laid by. So it ain't no wonder the neighbors say, 'It 's only justice, Ma'ame Cibot, that your good gentleman should leave you a little annuity.' Well, I tell 'em, 'No; I 'm disinter-

ested.' I don't know how women can do good out o' selfishness. 'T is n't doing good at all, is it, monsieur? I don't go to church, that's true: I have n't got the time; but my conscience tells me what's right to do. There, there, now don't twist round that way, my lamb, and don't scratch yourself. Goodness! how yellow you are getting! You are so yellow that you are almost brown! How queer that a couple o' weeks can make you look like a lemon! Well, as I was saying, honesty is poor folks' property; they need to have some. Well, let's suppose the worst does come to the worst with you: I shall be the first to tell you to leave all you are worth to Monsieur Schmucke. It's your duty to do so; for is n't he all the family you've got? and don't he love you, that man, like a dog loves his master?"

"Ah, yes!" said Pons. "I have had none but him to love me all my life."

"Oh, monsieur!" said Madame Cibot, "that ain't kind. Don't I love you?"

"I did n't say that, my good Madame Cibot."

"There you go, and take me for a servant, a common cook, who hain't got no heart! My goodness! I may well wear myself out taking care o' two old bachelors for eleven years, and thinking o' nothing but their comfort! Don't I rummage over ten fruit-shops, and let people make jokes on me, just to get you the best Brie cheese? Don't I scour the market for your fresh butter? Don't I take care of all your property? Have I broken, or cracked, or even chipped, a single thing in ten years? Yes, that's it! Take care of 'em just as a mother takes care of her children, and they'll fling you a 'Good Madame Cibot,' which tells you plainly

there ain't a scrap o' feeling for you in the heart of an old gentleman you 've cared for like the son of a king; for the little King o' Rome was n't never cared for as you 've been! Will you bet me they took care of him as I've taken care o' you? why, he died in the flower of his age! Look here, monsieur, you ain't just; you're ungrateful. You treat me so just because I 'm a poor concierge. Good gracious! You think, like the rest of 'em, that I 'm no better nor a dog —"

"But, my dear Madame Cibot —"

"Come, come, you who know such a deal, tell me why we door-keepers should be treated like that? Why ain't we allowed feelings? Why do people sneer at us in these days when they talk about equality? Ain't I worth as much as any other woman, — I, who was once as pretty a woman as any in all Paris? They called me the 'beautiful oyster-girl,' and I used to have seven or eight declarations of love a day. I could have them still, for that matter! Look here, monsieur, don't you know that scrap of a man, that old iron-dealer down below? Well, if I was a widow, — supposition, of course, — he 'd marry me blindfold; for he has n't no eyes for any one but me, and he 's forever saying: 'Oh, what fine arms you 've got, Madame Cibot! I dreamed last night they were bread, and I was the butter being spread on 'em!' Look, monsieur, there 's a pair of arms for you!"

Here she turned up her sleeve and showed a really magnificent arm, as white and fresh as her hand was red and wrinkled, — a plump, round, dimpled arm, which came forth from its swathing of coarse merino as a blade is drawn from the scabbard, dazzling the eyes of the

worthy Pons, who did not venture to gaze at it too long.

"They've opened as many hearts as my knife has opened oysters," she resumed. "Well, they belong to Cibot, and I'm doing very wrong to neglect that poor dear; he'd throw himself over a precipice only to please me. And you, monsieur, for whom I'd do everything, — you don't call me nothing, only your 'good Ma'ame Cibot' — "

"Do listen to me," said the sick man. "I can't call you my mother, nor my wife — "

"Never, never in my life will I attach myself to any one again — "

"Do let me speak!" cried Pons. "I mentioned Schmucke just now — "

"Monsieur Schmucke! Ah, there's a heart indeed!" she said. "He loves me, he does, just because he's poor. It is riches that makes men unfeeling; and you are rich. Well, get a nurse, if you want one, and see the life she'll lead you! She'll torment you like a bumble-bee! The doctor says you must n't only drink, and she'll only let you eat! She'll get you into your grave for the sake of robbing you! You don't deserve a Madame Cibot! But go your ways. When Monsieur Poulain comes, tell him to send you a nurse — "

"What the devil! Just listen to me!" cried the angry patient, springing up. "I was not speaking of a woman when I mentioned my friend Schmucke. I know well enough there are no hearts that truly love me but yours and Schmucke's — "

"Don't get so excited!" cried the Cibot, darting upon Pons, and laying him back in his bed by force.

"How can I help loving you?" said poor Pons.

"Love me, do you? really and truly? There, there, forgive me, monsieur," she said, wiping her eyes. "Yes, I know how you love me, — just as rich folks love a servant when they throw 'em an annuity of six hundred francs; like they fling a bone to a dog in his kennel."

"Oh! Madame Cibot," cried Pons, "what do you take me for? You don't know me!"

"Ah! you do love me better nor that?" she exclaimed, meeting Pons's eyes. "You do love your poor old Cibot like a mother? Well, that 's right; I am your mother, and you are both of you my children! Ah! if I did but know the people that have made you unhappy, I 'd risk the police-court, and even a jail, to tear their eyes out. Such folks deserve to be put to death at the barrière Saint-Jacques, — and even that 's too good a fate for such villains. You, so good and tender, — for you 've got a heart of gold; you were born into the world to make some woman happy. Yes, any one can see that; you were made for it! From the very first I 've said, seeing how you lived with Monsieur Schmucke: 'Monsieur Pons has just wasted his life; he was cut out for a good husband.' Ah! you were a man to love a woman!"

"Yes," said Pons, "and yet I never had one!"

"Really and truly?" she exclaimed, taking his hand with an insinuating air. "Don't you know what it is to have a mistress who would go all lengths for you? It ain't possible! If I were in your place I would n't go to the other world without knowing the greatest happiness there is in this. Poor dear! If I was what

I used to be, on my honor I 'd leave Cibot for you! With a nose like yours, — for you 've got a fine, proud one! — how did it happen, my poor cherub? Perhaps you 'll tell me it is n't all women who have an eye for a man, — and that 's true enough; they do marry so at hap-hazard, it is pitiable to see 'em! I thought you had mistresses by the dozen, — dancers, actresses, duchesses; for you ain't never at home. I used to say to Cibot, when I 'd see you setting off, 'There 's Monsieur Pons going gallivanting.' Yes, honor bright! that 's just what I did say to him; I was so sure you were fond o' women. Why, Heaven created you for love. I saw that the very first day you dined here with Monsieur Schmucke. And did n't he cry about it all the next day, and say to me, 'Matame Zipod, he tit tine here!' He made me cry like an ox myself. Ah! and was n't he miserable when you began your rovings over again? Poor man! I never saw no such desolation. You are quite right to make him your heir; he 's a whole family in himself, the blessed man! No, don't you forget him; for if you do, God won't never receive you into Paradise. He don't let no one in there who is n't grateful enough to leave his friends an annuity."

Pons made vain attempts to reply. The Cibot talked as the wind blows. A way might be found to stop a steam-engine; but the tongue of a Parisian concierge of the feminine gender is assuredly too much for the genius of any inventor.

"I know what you are going to say," she resumed. "Now, it don't kill nobody to make his will when he 's sick, and if I was in your place I would n't neglect that poor dear sheep now, for fear of accidents. He 's the

blessed fool of the good Lord; he knows nothing about nothing: and if I was you I would n't leave him to the mercy of those harpies the lawyers, nor relations neither, who are the scum of the earth. There has n't one been to see you all these twenty days that you 've been so ill. You don't mean to give your property to such people, I hope? Do you know, I'm told these things you 've got here are worth having?"

"Well, yes," said Pons.

"Rémonencq, who knows you are an amateur, and who sells such things second-hand, says he 'll give you an annuity of thirty thousand francs if you 'll let him have your pictures after your death. Now, there 's a chance! In your place I 'd take it. I thought at first he was making fun o' me when he said it. You ought to tell Monsieur Schmucke the value of those things; he 's a man they could cheat like a baby. He has n't the slightest idea what those fine things are worth; he knows so little about it, he 'd give 'em away for a song, — unless, for love of you, he kept 'em all his life: that is, if he outlives you; for, more like, your death will kill him. But I shall be here, I shall; and I 'll protect him against everybody — I and Cibot."

"Dear Madame Cibot!" said Pons, touched by the simple good feeling of the lower classes which seemed to run through her detestable garrulity, "what would become of me without you and Schmucke?"

"Yes, yes, we are the only friends you 've got in this world; that 's true enough. But two kind hearts are worth all the families put together. Don't talk to me of families! They are like what that old actor said of the tongue, — all that 's best, and all that 's worst.

Where 's your family? Have you got any relations? I never saw none of 'em."

"It is they who have laid me on a sick bed!" cried Pons bitterly.

"Ha! then you have got relations?" exclaimed the Cibot, starting up as if her chair had suddenly turned to a red-hot ploughshare. "They must be a nice set, your relations! Here 's twenty days — yes, this very morning, twenty days — that you 've been at death's door, and there ain't none of 'em has come to ask how you are! If that is n't more than flesh and blood can stand! If I were you, I 'd rather leave my money to the Foundling Hospital than give 'em one penny."

"Eh! my dear Madame Cibot, I meant to leave all I possessed to my young cousin, the daughter of my first-cousin, Monsieur Camusot, — you know whom I mean? The gentleman who came here to see me nearly two months ago."

"Ah, yes! a little fat man who sent his servants to beg your pardon for his wife's folly. The waiting-maid asked me a lot of questions about you. Affected old thing! I 'd half a mind to dust her velvet jacket for her with the handle o' my broom. Who ever heard of a lady's maid with a velvet jacket? The world 's turned upside down: what 's the use of making revolutions? Yes, yes, dine twice a day, if you can, you rich rascals; but I say the laws will be useless, there won't be nothing sacred, if Louis-Philippe don't keep up a proper distinction o' classes! I 'd like to know how we are all going to be equal, if a waiting-maid is to have a velvet jacket, and I, Madame Cibot, with thirty years' honesty to boast of, hain't none? A pretty state o' things!

People ought to be seen for what they are. A lady's maid is a lady's maid, just as I 'm a concierge. What do they wear epaulets with that big bullion for, in the army? Everybody in their own rank, I say! I 'll tell you what 'll be the upshot of all this, — France will be ruined! Under the Empire things went different, did n't they, monsieur? That 's just what I said to Cibot; said I: 'Look here, my man, a house where they keep lady's maids in velvet jackets is like folks without no bowels o' compassion.' "

"Compassion! ah, that 's just it!" exclaimed Pons. And thereupon he recounted all his griefs and mortifications to Madame Cibot, who poured forth invectives against his relations, and testified extreme tenderness for him at each pause in the melancholy tale, until at last she wept!

To understand the possibility of this sudden intimacy between the poor musician and Madame Cibot, it is enough to consider the situation of an old celibate, grievously ill for the first time in his life, stretched upon a bed of suffering, alone in the world, having to pass each day face to face with his own thoughts, and finding the time hang all the heavier under the indefinable sufferings with which liver diseases blacken even the brightest lives, because, deprived of his usual occupations, he hungered for the streets of Paris and longed for those sights which they offer gratis. Such absolute and gloomy solitude, such pain preying on the moral even more than on the physical being, — the starvation of life, as it were, — drives a celibate, and above all one whose nature is weak and whose heart is tender, to attach himself to whoever takes care of him; just as a

drowning man clings to a plank. Pons therefore listened eagerly to Madame Cibot's cackle. Schmucke, Madame Cibot, and Monsieur Poulain were to him the whole of humanity, and the bedroom was his universe. If all sick persons concentrate their minds on the little round which their eyes can see, and if their egotism takes the form of subordinating themselves to the people and things about them, we may imagine what an old bachelor, without domestic affections and never having known love, was capable of doing. During the last twenty days Pons had actually been brought to regret, now and then, that he had not married Madeleine Vivet. Therefore in those same twenty days Madame Cibot had already gained an immense hold over her patient's mind, and he thought himself a lost man without her; as to Schmucke, he was only a second self for the poor patient. Madame Cibot's wonderful art consisted, unknown perhaps to herself, in giving utterance to Pons's own thoughts.

"Ah! here comes the doctor," she said, as the bell rang.

She left Pons all alone, knowing perfectly well that the Jew and Rémonencq had arrived.

"Don't make any noise, gentlemen," she said, "lest he should suspect something; for he 's as ticklish as a toad about those treasures of his!"

"It will be enough just to walk through the room," said the Jew, who had come provided with an opera-glass and a magnifier.

XVI.

DEPRAVITY DISCUSSED.

THE room which held the chief part of the Pons collection was one of those ancient salons such as French architects formerly designed for the nobility, twenty-five feet wide by thirty feet long, and thirteen feet in height. All the pictures which the old man possessed, sixty-eight in number, were hung on the four walls of this salon, which was panelled in wood and painted white and gold; but the white which had yellowed and the gold which had tarnished with time, gave harmonious tones which did not conflict with the effect of the pictures. Fourteen statues, raised on short columns, were placed either in the angles of the room or between the pictures, on corbels made by Boule. Buffets of ebony, all carved, and of regal richness, were fastened round the walls above the wainscoting; these buffets held the bric-à-brac. A row of sideboards in carved wood, placed down the centre of the room, were also covered with the choicest treasures of human toil, — ivories, bronzes, carvings, enamels, jewelry, porcelains, etc.

As soon as the Jew set foot in this sanctuary, he went straight to four masterpieces, which he knew to be the finest in the collection, four pictures painted by masters whose works were lacking in his own. They were to him what the flora of distant countries are to naturalists, — *desiderata* which drive them to journey from the setting

to the rising sun, to the tropics, over deserts, over prairies, across savannas, and through the depths of virgin forests. The first picture was by Sebastian del Piombo, the second by Fra Bartolommeo della Porta, the third a landscape by Hobbema, and the last the portrait of a woman by Albrecht Dürer — four jewels! Sebastian del Piombo is, in the art of painting, a brilliant central point in whom three schools meet, each in its highest excellence. Originally a Venetian painter, he went to Rome and took the style of Raphael under the direction of Michael Angelo, who wished to pit him against Raphael, and contest, in the person of a lieutenant, the supremacy of that sovereign pontiff of Art. Thus this indolent genius brought together Venetian color, Florentine composition, and the Raphaelesque manner in the few pictures which he deigned to paint, the sketches for which were made, it is said, by Michael Angelo. The perfection attained by this painter, thus armed with triple power, will be seen by any one who studies the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli in the Musée of Paris, — a picture which may challenge comparison with Titian's Man of the Glove, or the portrait of the Old Man in which Raphael combined his own perfection with that of Correggio, or the picture of Charles VIII. by Lionardo da Vinci, without detriment to its fame. These four pearls are of the same water, the same quality of light, the same fulness, the same brilliancy, the same calibre. Human art can go no farther. It is superior to Nature, which can only make the original live its day. Pons possessed another work of this great genius, this immortal but incurably indolent palette, — a Knight of Malta in prayer, painted on slate, of a freshness, a finish,

and a depth greater even than those qualities in the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli. The Holy Family of Fra Bartolommeo would readily have been taken for a Raphael by many connoisseurs; the Hobbema would have brought sixty thousand francs at auction; and as to the Albrecht Dürer, this portrait of a woman was doubtless a pendant to the famous Holzschuer of Nuremberg, for which the kings of Bavaria, Holland, and Prussia have on several occasions vainly offered two hundred thousand francs. Was she the wife, or the daughter, of the Chevalier Holzschuer, the friend of Albrecht Dürer? That the pictures were once a pair may be considered undeniable; for the woman in the Pons collection is in an attitude which requires a pendant, and the heraldic insignia are painted in the same position in both pictures. Moreover, the *ætatis suæ XLI.* is in perfect accordance with the age given on the portrait so religiously guarded by the Holzschuer family in Nuremberg, which has been lately engraved.

The tears stood in Élie Magus's eyes as he looked, one after the other, at these masterpieces.

"I will give you two thousand francs' commission for each of those pictures if you will help me to get them for forty thousand francs," he whispered in Madame Cibot's ear, who stood open-mouthed at a fortune thus tumbling from heaven at her feet.

The admiration, or, to speak more truly, the ecstasy, of the Jew had produced such disorder in his mind and in his miserly habits that for once, as we see, his Jewish soul was overthrown.

"What about me?" said Rémonencq, who knew nothing of pictures.

"Everything here is of equal value," whispered Magus slyly; "take any ten of the pictures on the same terms, and your fortune is made."

The robbers looked at each other, all three in the grasp of the most voluptuous of enjoyments, — the gratification of success in the pursuit of fortune; at that moment the sick man's voice rang out and vibrated like the sound of a bell.

"Who is there?" cried Pons.

"Monsieur, lie down again!" exclaimed the Cibot, springing towards Pons and forcing him back into his bed. "Goodness! do you want to kill yourself? Why, it was n't the doctor, it is that good Rémonencq, who is so uneasy about you that he came to ask how you are. You are so beloved, all the house is astir about you. What are you afraid of?"

"But it seems to me that there are several persons there," said the sick man.

"Several? well done! Are you dreaming? You 'll end by going crazy, take my word for it. There! look here!"

So saying, she opened the door quickly, and made a sign to Magus to go away, and to Rémonencq to come forward.

"Well, my good monsieur," said the Auvergnat, for whose instruction the woman had spoken, "I came to hear how you are; the whole house is in a fright about you. People don't like a death in the house! Besides, Papa Monistrol, whom you know very well, sent me to say that if you wanted any money, he was at your service."

"He sent you here to give a look at my bibelots,"

said the old collector, with a bitterness that was full of suspicion.

In diseases of the liver the victims nearly always develop sudden and special antipathies; they concentrate their ill-humor on some object or on some person, it does not matter what or who. Pons, who already imagined that some one was after his treasure, was possessed with the fixed idea of protecting it; and he was constantly sending Schmucke back and forth to see if any one had slipped into his sanctuary.

"Your collection is fine enough to tempt the *chineurs*," said Rémonencq astutely. "I don't understand high-class curiosities; but monsieur is thought to be such a great connoisseur that, though I am not up in such things, I'd buy some of them from monsieur with my eyes shut. Now, if monsieur wanted any money, — nothing costs like these cursed illnesses. I've known my sister to spend thirty sous in ten days for medicines when her blood is out of order; though she'd have got well just as soon without them. Doctors are cheats, who profit by our weakness to — "

"Thank you, monsieur, I need nothing; good-day," said Pons, looking uneasily at the Auvergnat.

"I'll show him the way out," said Madame Cibot in a low voice to her patient, "for fear he should touch anything."

"Yes, yes," answered Pons, thanking her with a look.

Madame Cibot shut the door of the bedroom, — an action which at once roused the sick man's suspicion. She found Magus standing motionless in front of the four pictures. This immobility, this rapt admiration,

can be understood only by those whose souls are open to the ideal, to the ineffable emotion caused by the perfection of a work of art. Such people remain rooted on their feet for hours before the Jocunda of Lionardo da Vinci, the Mistress of Titian, the Holy Family of Andrea del Sarto, the Children of Dominichino garlanded with flowers, the little cameo of Raphael or his portrait of the Old Man, — the greatest of all the great masterpieces of art.

"Get away without making any noise," said the Cibot.

The Jew went slowly out, walking backwards as he went, gazing at the pictures as a lover looks at a mistress to whom he is forced to bid adieu. When he reached the landing, Madame Cibot, to whom this earnest contemplation had supplied a few ideas, tapped Magus on his skinny arm.

"You must give me four thousand francs for each picture; if not, no bargain," she said.

"I am so poor!" said Magus. "If I want these pictures, it is for love, pure love of art, my good lady."

"You're such a dry stick, my old fellow," said the woman, "tnat I don't believe in no such love. But if you don't promise me sixteen thousand francs here to-day, in presence of Rémonencq, to-morrow I'll make it twenty thousand."

"I promise the sixteen," answered the Jew, alarmed at her avidity.

"What can he swear by? he's only a Jew," said the Cibot to Rémonencq.

"You can trust him," said the Auvergnat; "he's as honest a man as I am."

"Hey! and you?" she demanded. "If I give you some o' the pictures to sell, what will you pay me?"

"Half the profits," said Rémonencq promptly.

"I'd rather have a sum down; I'm not in business," said Madame Cibot.

"You understand it pretty well, though!" said Élie Magus, smiling; "you would make a fine dealer."

"I've offered to go into partnership with her, body and estate," declared Rémonencq, taking Madame Cibot's plump arm and rapping it with the force of a hammer. "I don't ask any other capital than her beauty! You are very wrong to hold on to your Turk of a Cibot and his shears. Is it a little tailor who can make a rich woman of a beauty like you? Ah, what a figure you'd cut in my shop on the boulevard, in the middle of all the curiosities, chattering to the customers and twisting 'em round your finger! Come, you give up that lodge of yours as soon as you've made your haul here, and see how well we'll get on together."

"Made my haul here!" exclaimed Madame Cibot. "I ain't capable of taking so much as the value of a pin! Do you hear me, Rémonencq? I'm known in all the quarter for an honest woman, I am!"

Her eyes flamed.

"There, there, don't get angry!" said Élie Magus; "the man seems to love you too well to mean any offence."

"Hey! how she would draw the customers!" cried the Auvergnat.

"Now, be fair, both of you," resumed Madame Cibot, pacified, "and consider for yourselves how I'm placed. Here's ten years that I've been wearing

myself out, body and soul, for those two old bachelors, and they hain't never given me a single thing except words. Rémonencq can tell you I feed 'em at a loss; I lose twenty to thirty sous a day on 'em. All my savings have gone that way. I swear it by the soul of my mother, — the only author of my being that I've ever known, — it 's as true as I 'm born, and as the daylight 's above us: and may my coffee poison me if I lie one penny's worth. Well, then, here 's one on 'em going to die, that 's sure; and it 's the richest of the pair whom I've treated like they were my own children. Now would you believe, my dear monsieur, that I've been telling him for twenty days he 's at death's door (for Monsieur Poulain has given him over); and yet this skinflint won't say a word about putting me in his will any more than if he did n't know me. My word of honor! nobody gets their rights unless they take 'em. Talk to me of trusting to the heirs, indeed! That 's likely! Such talk stinks in my nostrils. People are all scum!"

"That 's true," said Élie Magus artfully; "and it is such as we," he added, looking at Rémonencq, "who are really the honest men."

"Oh! no offence; I was n't speaking of you," said Madame Cibot. "Present company, as the old actor said, is always accepted. I 'll swear to you those two old bachelors owe me nearly three thousand francs; the little I had saved up is all gone for their medicines and expenses. And suppose they did n't give me nothing for all I've advanced! I 'm such a fool, with my honesty, that I don't like to speak to 'em about it. Now, you know what business is, my good monsieur: would you advise me to go to a lawyer?"

"A lawyer!" cried Rémonencq; "you know a deal more than all the lawyers put together!"

The sound of a heavy body falling on the floor of the dining-room echoed through the wide vault of the staircase.

"Good God!" cried Madame Cibot, "what's the matter? I do believe my old gentleman has tumbled headlong! —"

She gave a push to her accomplices, who rushed downstairs with agility, and then flew into the dining-room, where she saw Pons, in his nightshirt, lying at full length upon the floor in a dead faint. She seized the old man, lifted him like a feather, and carried him to his bed. When she had laid him back in it, she put a burnt goose-quill to his nose, wet his temples with eau-de-cologne, and brought him to his senses.

"Without your slippers, in your shirt-tails! It's enough to kill you! Why do you suspect me? If that's how it's to be, good-by to you! After serving you ten years, and paying out my own money for you, and spending all my savings so as not to worry that poor Monsieur Schmucke, who goes crying down the stairs like a baby, — this is to be my reward, is it? You spy upon me! Well, God has punished you, and that's right! And here if I have n't given myself a strain lifting you in my arms! And perhaps I 'm injured for the rest of my life! Goodness! and there's the door that I left open!"

"Whom were you talking to?"

"What an idea!" cried the Cibot. "Am I your slave? I have n't got to render no account to you o' my doings. Don't you know, if you behave so to me, I 'll

put my foot down and leave you right there? Then you can hire a nurse."

Pons, terrified at this threat, unconsciously revealed to Madame Cibot the lengths to which she could go with this sword of Damocles.

"It is because I am so ill," he said piteously.

"Oh! I dare say!" she answered roughly, leaving Pons quite bewildered, a prey to remorse, admiring the clamorous devotion of his nurse, and so full of self-reproach that he did not feel the cruel hurt of his fall upon the flagging of the dining-room, by which he had just aggravated the effects of his disease. Madame Cibot saw Schmucke coming up the stairway.

"Come, monsieur, come! I've bad news for you. Monsieur Pons is out of his head. Fancy! he got up without anything on, and followed me, and he fell down right there at full length. If you ask him why he did it, he don't know. He's wrong in his head. I did nothing to provoke such violence, except that I was talking to him about his early loves. But there! you can't trust no man; they are all old rips —"

Schmucke listened to Madame Cibot as if she were talking Hebrew.

"I've given myself such a wrench that I've got a hurt that will last me all my days!" she added, seeming to suffer excruciating pain, and suddenly resolving to make the most of an idea that came from a slight fatigue she felt in her muscles. "I am a fool! When I saw him there on the ground, I took him up in my arms and carried him to his bed like a child, that I did! And now I just feel such a strain! Ah, I'm ill! I must go down. Take care of the patient. I must send Cibot for

Monsieur Poulain, and see what 's the matter with me. I 'd rather die than be a crippled creature ! "

She grasped the balusters and dragged herself down the staircase, making many contortions and uttering such plaintive moans that the other lodgers, much alarmed, came out from their appartements on the different landings. Schmucke supported the sufferer, shedding tears and explaining her great devotion. All the house, and soon all the neighborhood, heard of Madame Cibot's noble deed ; she had done herself, they said, a mortal injury by lifting one of the Nut-crackers in her arms. Schmucke, as soon as he could get back to Pons, told him about the sad condition of their factotum, and each gazed at the other, saying, " What will become of us without her? " Schmucke, observing the change in Pons's appearance produced by his strange freak, dared not scold him.

" Gonvound dat prig-à-prag ! It hat pedder pe purned dan gill my frent ! " he cried, after Pons had told him the cause of the accident. " It meks you tout dat goot Matame Zipod, who has her zafings lentet to us ! Dat ees not raight — but it ees eelness, I know dat ! "

" Ah ! what an illness ! I am changed ; I feel it," said Pons. " I don't wish to make you unhappy, my good Schmucke."

" Sgold me," said Schmucke, " pud leaf Matame Zipod aloan."

Doctor Poulain cured Madame Cibot in a few days of the internal injury she pretended to have suffered ; and his reputation became really illustrious throughout the Marais for the skill manifested in this cure, which was called miraculous. To Pons, the doctor attributed his

patient's recovery to her excellent constitution; and she resumed her attendance upon the two old gentlemen on the seventh day, to their great satisfaction. This event increased the power and tyranny of Madame Cibot a hundred-fold over the household arrangements of the two Nut-crackers, who during this week had been forced to run into debt, the debts being paid by her. She profited by the circumstance to obtain from Schmucke (and with what ease!) a receipt for the two thousand francs which she declared she had lent to the two friends.

"Ah! what a doctor Monsieur Poulain is," she said to Pons. "He'll save your life, my dear monsieur, for he's dragged me out o' my coffin. My poor Cibot thought I was dead! Well, now, Monsieur Poulain must have told you I did n't think of nothing but you when I was lying there on my bed. 'My God,' I used to say, 'take me; but let my dear Monsieur Pons live!'"

"Poor dear Madame Cibot, you came near having a fatal hurt through me!"

"Ah! if it had n't been for Monsieur Poulain, I should have been put to bed with a shovel by this time. Well, as that old actor used to say, 'When you 're at the bottom of the grave, you can turn a summerset.' Philosophy is a good thing. How have you got along without me?"

"Schmucke nursed me," said the patient; "but our purse and our pupils have fared badly. I am sure I don't know how Schmucke has managed."

"Pe galm, Bons!" cried Schmucke; "our goot Matame Zipod ees our panker."

"Don't speak of that, my dear lamb; you 're both of

you my children," returned the Cibot. "My savings are safe with you. I'm not afraid; you're as sound as the Bank of France. As long as Cibot and I have a bit of bread, you shall have half of it — 't aint worth talking about."

"Boor Matame Zipod!" said Schmucke, as he went away.

Pons said nothing.

"Would you believe it, my precious," said Madame Cibot, noticing that her patient was uneasy, "when death was hanging over me — for, I tell you, it stared me in the face — the thing that worried me most was the thought of you poor dears left alone to your own devices, and my poor Cibot without a farthing. My savings are such a trifle that they would n't be worth speaking of, if it was n't for Cibot, in case of my death. Poor angel! that man has taken care of me as if I was a queen; he moaned over me like a calf, he did. But I felt sure o' you; I give you my word o' that. I said to myself: 'Don't you be afraid, Ma'ame Cibot; your gentlemen won't never leave you to starve.'"

Pons made no answer to this attack *ad testamentum*, though Madame Cibot paused for a reply.

"I will tell Schmucke to take care of you," he said at length.

"Ah!" cried the woman, "anything you do will be right; I can trust you and your heart. Don't say no more; it makes me ashamed, my dear, good cherub. Don't think o' nothing but getting well. You 'll live longer nor the rest of us."

Profound anxiety filled Madame Cibot's heart, and she resolved to get some explanation from Pons as to

the amount of the legacy he intended to leave her. As a preliminary step, she went to call on Doctor Poulain in his own home that evening, after she had served Schmucke's dinner, the old German being now in the habit of taking his meals by the bedside of his friend.

XVII.

THE HISTORY OF ALL FIRST APPEARANCES IN PARIS.

Doctor Poulain lived in the rue d'Orléans. He occupied a small ground-floor appartement consisting of an antechamber, a salon, and two bedrooms. An office which adjoined the antechamber and communicated with the doctor's bedroom had been converted into a study. A kitchen, one servant's bedroom, and a small cellar belonging to this suite of rooms were in the wing of the house, a vast structure, erected in the days of the Empire on the site of a former mansion, the garden of which still remained. This garden was divided among the three appartements on the ground-floor.

The suite of rooms belonging to the doctor had seen no change for forty years. The paint, papering, and decorations were all of the Empire. More than a generation of dirt and smoke had defaced the mirrors and friezes, the patterns of the wall-papers, the ceilings, and the paint on the woodwork. This little abode, in the depths of the Marais, cost a thousand francs a year. Madame Poulain, the doctor's mother, a woman sixty-five years of age, was spending her last years in the second bedroom. Her husband had been a breeches-maker, and she worked at the trade, on gaiters, leathern breeches, braces, and waistbands; in fact, on all the

various parts of that garment, now fallen into disuse. She never went out into the street, being fully occupied by the care of the doctor's housekeeping and the management of his one servant, and took the air only in the garden, which was entered by a glass door leading from the salon. On the death of her husband — which happened twenty years before the time of which we are writing — she had sold the business to her forewoman, who agreed to let her keep enough work to enable her to earn thirty sous a day. She had sacrificed everything to the education of her only son, in the effort to give him a vocation superior to that of his father. Proud of her Æsculapius, and confident of his success, she still continued to sacrifice herself to his interests, — happy in taking care of him, in economizing for his benefit, thinking only of his comfort, and loving him with an intelligent good sense not shown by all mothers. Thus Madame Poulain, who remembered very well that she had once been a mere work-woman, never injured her son by showing her defects, or exposing herself to ridicule, — for the good woman used her *s's* very much as Madame Cibot used her negatives. She always hid herself in her bedroom whenever, by chance, some important patient came to consult the doctor, or when his fellow-collegians and comrades in the hospital made their appearance. The doctor, therefore, was never obliged to blush for his mother, — whom, indeed, he reverenced, and whose defects of education were well compensated by this sublime species of tenderness. The sale of her business had yielded about twenty thousand francs, which she had put into the Grand-Livre in 1820; and the eleven hundred francs dividend therefrom represented the whole of her

means. So for several years the neighbors saw the family linen stretched on lines in the doctor's third of the garden. Madame Poulain and her one servant washed at home as a matter of economy. This small domestic detail had done the doctor much harm among those who did not choose to recognize his talent because they saw his poverty. The eleven hundred francs paid the rent, and in earlier years the leather-stitching of Madame Poulain — a fat, comfortable little old woman — had sufficed for all the wants of their humble household. After twelve years' persistence along this stony path, the doctor had come to earn about three thousand francs a year; so that Madame Poulain now had an income of something like five thousand francs to lay out. To any one who knows Paris, this will seem just enough for the strict necessaries of life.

The salon where the patients were accustomed to wait was meanly furnished with the vulgar and well-known mahogany sofa covered with yellow Utrecht velvet embossed with a pattern of flowers, four armchairs, six common chairs, a pier-table, and a tea-table, — which had all been the property of the late breeches-maker, and his particular choice. The clock, kept under a glass-case between two Egyptian candelabra, was in the shape of a lyre. It was a question how the curtains which hung at the windows could possibly have been preserved so long; for they were made of yellow calico, with a pattern of red geometrical rosettes from the manufactory at Jouy. (Oberkampf, the Bavarian manufacturer who first established calico print-works at Jouy-en-Josas, near Versailles, received the thanks of the Emperor in 1809 for these atrocious products of

his cotton industry.) The doctor's study was furnished in the same style, the paternal bed-chamber having supplied the wherewithal. The aspect of the room was stiff, dismal, and poverty-stricken. What patient could possibly believe in the skill of a doctor without renown who had barely any furniture? — in these days, too, when the art of advertising is all powerful, and when they gild the lamps on the Place de la Concorde to console the poor man and coax him to believe himself a rich citizen!

The antechamber served as a dining-room. The servant sat there at her sewing when not employed in the kitchen or in company with the doctor's mother. A glance sufficed to show the decent poverty which pervaded this melancholy room (which was left empty during the greater part of the day), as the eye rested on the little red muslin curtain covering the solitary window looking out upon the court. The cupboards held scraps of sodden patés, chipped plates, endless corks, the napkins of a week's use, — in short, all the necessary ignominies of the humbler Parisian households, whose next stage inevitably lands them in the pouch of a rag-picker. Thus it happened that in these days, when the new five-franc piece lurks in all minds and rolls on all tongues, the doctor, though thirty years of age and possessed of a mother without relations, was still a bachelor. In the course of ten years he had never met with the smallest pretext for a love-affair in the families to which his profession gave him access; for the healing art took him among those whose sphere in life very much resembled his own, — that is to say, minor clerks and the smaller dealers and manufacturers. His richest clients were

butchers, bakers, and the retail shopkeepers of the neighborhood, — people who commonly attributed their cure to Nature, and paid the doctor only forty sous for his visit, for the reason that he came on foot. In the medical profession a cabriolet is of more consequence than skill.

A life of commonplace events, without opportunities, ends by reacting upon even the most venturous mind. A man conforms to his fate, and accepts the mediocrity of his life. Doctor Poulain, after ten years' practice, was still at the toil of Sisyphus, without the sense of despair which made its first years so bitter. Nevertheless he cherished a dream; for every soul in Paris has his own visions: Rémonencq had his; so had Madame Cibot. Doctor Poulain hoped to be called to some rich and influential invalid, and to obtain by means of this patient — whom he should infallibly cure — an appointment as surgeon-in-chief to some hospital, or the position of doctor in a prison, or to the theatres of the boulevard, or in some government office. He had already obtained by such means the place of physician to the *mairie*. Called in by Madame Cibot, he had attended and cured Monsieur Pillerault, the owner of the house to which she and her husband were doorkeepers. Monsieur Pillerault, great-uncle of Madame la comtesse Popinot, who was wife of a minister, took an interest in the young man whose secret poverty he fathomed while making a visit of acknowledgment at the doctor's home; and he obtained from his great-nephew the minister, who deeply respected him, the situation at the mayor's office which Poulain had retained for five years, the meagre emoluments of which had come

just in time to keep him from carrying out a rash decision to emigrate. To leave France is to a Frenchman like going to his own funeral. Doctor Poulain hastened to thank the Comte Popinot; but the doctor in charge of the department over which the minister presided, proved to be the illustrious Bianchon, and Poulain recognized that he could never hope for that place himself. Thus the poor man, after flattering himself for a brief moment that he had won the protection of an influential statesman, one of the twelve or fifteen cards which an astute hand shuffles on the green baize of the council-board, was cast floundering back into the Marais, where he struggled among the poor and the lesser bourgeoisie, and fulfilled the duty of recording deaths at a salary of twelve hundred francs a year.

Doctor Poulain, once a somewhat distinguished medical student, and now a prudent practitioner, did not lack experience. His deaths caused no scandal, and he was able to study all diseases *in animâ vili*. Imagine, therefore, the gall on which he fed! The expression of his face, already strained and melancholy, was sometimes frightful. Put the gleaming eyes of a Tartufe and the sharpness of an Alceste into a bit of yellow parchment, and then picture to yourself the deportment, the attitudes, the glance of a man who knew himself to be just as skilful a doctor as the celebrated Horace Bianchon, and yet was held down in obscurity by an iron hand! Doctor Poulain could not help comparing his poor earnings, of ten francs on his fortunate days, with those of Bianchon, which amounted daily to five or six hundred. Does not this reveal to us all the hatreds of democracy? Moreover, this man of ambition, thus held

down, had no cause for self-reproach. He had done his best, and wooed fortune by the invention of certain purgative pills like those of Morrison. He intrusted the enterprise to a comrade at the hospital, a student who had subsequently become a druggist. But the said druggist, having fallen in love with a dancer at the Opéra Comique, ended in bankruptcy; and the patent for the purgative pills being unfortunately taken out in his name, this discovery enriched his successor only. The bankrupt departed for Mexico, the land of gold, carrying with him a thousand francs of poor Poulain's savings, who, by way of consolation, was treated by the dancer as a usurer when he attempted to recover his money. Since his fortunate attendance on Pillerault, not a single rich patient had sent for him. Poulain scoured the Marais on foot like a lean cat, and on a round of some twenty visits earned from two sous to forty. The remunerative client was to him the phantasmal bird known in all sublunary realms under the name of the phœnix, or white crow.

A young lawyer without cases, a young doctor without patients, are the two extreme expressions of decent Despair, — that chill, silent Despair which is peculiar to the city of Paris; Despair clothed in black trousers whose whitening seams recall the zinc of a gutter, in a waistcoat of too-shiny satin, in a hat sacredly cared for, old gloves, and a cotton shirt. It is a poem of sadness, — sombre as the Secrets of the Conciergerie. Other forms of poverty — those of the poet, the artist, the actor, the musician — are cheered by a gayety springing naturally from the arts and from the careless ease of the Bohemia into which we launch and which

leads to the Thebaïdes of genius. But to the two black coats which go a-foot, worn by the two professions for whom all things are like an open wound, and to whose sight humanity shows only its shameful aspect, the dreary dead levels of their opening career give to such men a sinister and scheming expression, through which flashes of accumulated hatred and ambition dart forth, like the first flames of a smothered fire. When two college friends meet, after twenty years' separation, the rich man avoids his poorer comrade and does not recognize him; he is terrified by the gulf which fate has opened between them. The one has traversed life in the chariot of fortune, or on the golden clouds of success; the other has plodded along the subterranean ways of Parisian sewers, and carries their stigmata upon him. How many old comrades avoided the doctor at the mere sight of his coat and waistcoat!

It is now easy to see why Doctor Poulain consented to play his part in the comedy of Madame Cibot's illness. His ambitions and all his eager desires can be imagined. Not finding the slightest sign of injury in any of her organs, observing the regularity of her pulse, the perfect ease of all her movements, and hearing her distressing cries, he understood she had some good reason for pretending to be at death's door. As the rapid cure of this serious illness was likely to make him talked of in the arrondissement, he exaggerated Madame Cibot's pretended rupture, and talked of taking it in time and reducing it. He exhibited certain sham remedies, and put his patient through a fictitious operation which was crowned with success. He hunted up, in the arsenal of Desplein's extraordinary cures, a pecu-

liar case and applied it to Madame Cibot, modestly attributing the cure to the great surgeon, whose imitator he claimed to be. Such are the tricks of men who are endeavoring to rise in Paris; they turn even the genius of others into ladders for themselves. But as all things wear out, even the rungs of a ladder, the recruits in each profession are occasionally at a loss for the wood with which to make their foothold. Sometimes the Parisian turns refractory. Weary of building pedestals, he sulks like a spoiled child, and discards his idols; or, to speak more accurately, men of talent are sometimes lacking to his adoration: the vein which gives the ore of genius has its *lacunæ*. The Parisian rebels at this, and refuses to gild or worship the inferior gods.

Madame Cibot, entering with her accustomed brusqueness, surprised the doctor at table with his old mother, eating a salad of lamb's-lettuce, — the cheapest of all the salads, — with nothing for dessert but a thin wedge of Brie cheese, a dish sparsely filled with dried fruits called "the four mendicants," — figs, nuts, almonds, and raisins in which the stalks predominated, — and a plate of miserable shrunken apples.

"Mother, you can stay," said the doctor, retaining Madame Poulain by the arm; "it is Madame Cibot, of whom I spoke to you."

"My respects to you, madame; the same to you, monsieur," said Madame Cibot, taking the chair the doctor gave her. "Ah! your mother is very fortunate to have a son so full o' talent. He 's my savior, madame; he has dragged me from the tomb!"

The widow Poulain thought Madame Cibot charming as she listened to these praises of her son.

"I've come to tell you, my dear Monsieur Poulain, that our dear Monsieur Pons is very ill, and I want to speak to you about him."

"Let us go into the salon," said Doctor Poulain, calling Madame Cibot's attention to the servant with a significant sign.

Once in the salon, the Cibot explained at much length her situation as to the Nut-crackers. She related the story of her loan with many embellishments, and recounted the immense services she had rendered Monsieur Schmucke and Monsieur Pons for more than ten years. According to her account, the two old men would never have survived without her maternal care. She posed as an angel, and told so many lies, well watered with tears, that she ended by touching the heart of old Madame Poulain.

"You understand, my dear monsieur," the Cibot said as she finished, "I really must know what Monsieur Pons intends to do for me in case of his death. That's an event I don't want nohow; for the care o' them innocent babes, you see, ma'am, is my very life, and if I lose one I shall always take care o' the other. Nature cut me out for a model o' maternity. I don't know what would become o' me if I had n't no one to think of and care for like an infant. So, if Monsieur Poulain is willing, he would do me a service, for which I'd be very grateful, if he would just speak to Monsieur Pons for me. Goodness! a thousand francs' annuity, — is that too much, I'd like to know? It is just so much laid by for Monsieur Schmucke; for my dear patient told me he was going to leave me to that poor German, who is to be his heir, so he says. But what's a man who can't put two and

two together in French, and who 's capable of going off to Germany if he feels lonely after his friend dies?"

"My dear Madame Cibot," said the doctor, becoming very grave, "such matters don't concern physicians, and the practice of my profession would be taken from me if it were known that I meddled with the testamentary dispositions of a client. The law does not permit a doctor to receive a legacy from his patient."

"What a fool of a law! for what's to hinder me from dividing my legacy with you?" returned the Cibot instantly.

"I will go even further," said the doctor. "My professional conscience forbids me to speak to Monsieur Pons of his death. In the first place, he is not in sufficient danger to require me to do so; and next, such a conversation might excite him and put him in a state that would do him real harm, and render his illness fatal."

"But I don't make no bones o' telling him to put his affairs in order, and he ain't none the worse," returned the Cibot. "He 's used to it; you need n't be afraid."

"Don't say anything more about it, my dear Madame Cibot. These things are not within the province of my profession; they belong to the notaries —"

"But, my dear Monsieur Poulain, supposing Monsieur Pons asked you himself how he was, and whether he ought n't to attend to his affairs, — would n't you be willing to tell him it's good for people's health to get 'em all settled? And then, you know, you could slip in a little word about me —"

"Oh! of course if he speaks to me about making his will, I sha'n't prevent him," said the doctor.

"Well, that's all I ask!" exclaimed Madame Cibot. "I came to thank you for your care of me," she added, slipping a twisted bit of paper containing three gold pieces into his hand. "That 's all I can do just now. Ah! if I were rich, my dear Monsieur Poulain, you should be rich too; for you're the image o' the good God on this earth. Yes, ma'am, you 've got an angel for a son!"

So saying, she got up; Madame Poulain bowed to her with a kindly air, and the doctor showed her out to the landing. There this horrible Lady Macbeth of the streets was suddenly dazzled by a gleam of infernal light: she perceived that the doctor had made himself her accomplice by accepting a fee for the pretended cure of her pretended injury.

"How is it, my good Monsieur Poulain," she said to him, "that after pulling me through my accident, you should refuse to save me from poverty by merely saying a few words?"

The physician felt that he had let the devil catch him by a hair of his head, and that the hair was now twisted round the pitiless hook of the fiend's red claw. Terrified at losing his integrity for so slight a cause, he answered the woman's diabolical suggestion by an idea that was not less diabolical.

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot," he said, drawing her back into the antechamber and leading the way to his study. "I am going to pay the debt of gratitude I am under to you, to whom, indeed, I owe my situation at the *mairie*."

"We 'll go halves," she said quickly.

"In what?" asked the doctor.

"In the legacy," answered the woman.

"You do not know me," replied the doctor, taking the tone of Valerius Publicola. "Don't say another word about it. I have a college friend, a very intelligent fellow, with whom I am all the more intimate because we have had just about the same luck in life. When I was studying medicine, he was studying law; while I was an *interne* at the hospital he was engrossing law-papers with Maître Couture. Son of a shoemaker, just as I am the son of a breeches-maker, he has n't found much lively sympathy in this world, neither has he found much cash; for, after all, cash is only obtainable through sympathy. He could n't buy a practice anywhere except in the provinces, at Mantes. Now, those provincials are so incapable of understanding Parisian cleverness that they found fault with him in every way."

"Scum!" exclaimed the Cibot.

"Yes," resumed the doctor, "they combined so closely against him that he was forced to sell his practice in order to get back certain deeds which they construed into evidence of his wrong-doing. The *procureur-du-roi* was mixed up in it; that functionary came from those parts, and made common cause with his country-people. The poor fellow, who is even more out-at-elbows than I am, and who lives as I do, is named Fraisier. He has taken refuge in this arrondissement, where he is reduced to practise before the *juge-de-paix* and the criminal police-courts, though he is a barrister. He lives close by, in the rue de la Perle. Call at No. 9 and go up three pairs of stairs; on the landing you will see, printed in gold letters on a small

bit of red morocco, 'OFFICE OF MONSIEUR FRAISIER.' Fraisier attends specially to lawsuits among the working-classes and the poor of this arrondissement, and he does it at very moderate prices. He is an honest man; for I don't need to tell you that, with his capabilities, if he were a scoundrel he would be rolling in his chariot. I will see my friend Fraisier this evening. You can go to his place early to-morrow morning. He knows Monsieur Louchard, the bailiff, Monsieur Tabareau, the sheriff's officer, Monsieur Vitel, the *juge-de-paix*, and Monsieur Trognon, a notary; he is already launched among the most important business men of the neighborhood. If he is willing to take charge of your interests, you could get Monsieur Pons to consult him; and you 'll find him, let me tell you, another self. Only, mind you don't make to him, as you did to me, proposals which will wound his sense of honor; he has good sense, and he will understand you. When it comes to paying for his services, I 'll be your go-between."

Madame Cibot looked at the doctor with a sinister expression.

"Is n't he the lawyer," she asked, "who pulled that shopkeeper in the rue Vieille-du-Temple, that Madame Florimond, out of the bad scrape she got into about her good friend's will?"

"The same," said the doctor.

"Was n't it a shame," cried the Cibot, "that after he'd won her cause and got her two thousand francs a year, she would n't marry him when he asked her, and thought she was quit of her debt by giving him a dozen linen shirts and twenty-four handkerchiefs, — a regular trousseau!"

"My dear Madame Cibot, the 'trousseau,' as you call it, was worth a thousand francs, and Fraisier, who was then just setting up in this neighborhood, wanted the things badly. Besides, she paid his bill without a word. That affair brought Fraisier a great deal of business, and he is now very busy, among the same class that I have to do with; our clients are much the same."

"None but the righteous thrive here below," said Madame Cibot. "Well, good-by, and thank you, my dear Monsieur Poulain."

Here begins the drama, or, if you like it better, the terrible comedy, of the death of an old celibate delivered over, by force of circumstances, to the rapacity of covetous natures grouped around his bed, — a rapacity which in this case found auxiliaries in the keenest of all passions, that of a picture-maniac; in the hungry eagerness of Monsieur Fraisier, who, when you see him in his den, will make you shudder; in the thirst of an Auvergnat capable of anything, even a crime, to lay hold of money. This comedy, to which what has gone before may be considered as the introduction, employs as actors all the personages who, so far, have filled the scene.

XVIII.

A MAN OF LAW.

THE degradation of that title is one of the curiosities of manners and morals which for adequate explanation require volumes. Write to a lawyer, and address him as "a man of law," and you will offend him as surely as you would offend a wholesale merchant of colonial produce by directing a letter to him as "Mr. So-and-so, grocer." A tolerably large number of persons who ought to know — since these refinements of social breeding are their all of knowledge — are still unaware that the designation "man of letters" is the worst insult that can be offered to an author. The word "monsieur" is a striking example of the life and death of words. "Monsieur" really means "monseigneur." This title — formerly of importance, and still applied to kings by the transformation of "sieur" into "sire" — is given to everybody in these days. And yet the use of the word "messire," which is nothing more than a corruption of "monsieur" and its equivalent, raises a storm in the republican newspapers if by chance it is noticed in a burial permit! Magistrates, counsellors, jurists, judges, barristers, ministerial officers, solicitors, attorneys, notaries, and special pleaders are the varieties under which all those who administer justice, or who live by it, are classed. The

lowest rungs of the ladder are the "practitioner" and the "man of law." The practitioner — vulgarly called the bailiff's follower — is a hap-hazard lawyer. He is employed to look after the execution of the law and the judgments rendered; he may in fact be called the executioner of the civil cases. As to the "man of law," so called, he is the special reproach of the profession. He is to the realm of law what the "man of letters" is to literature. Rivalry, which eats into all professions in France, has invented terms of disparagement. Every profession has its own form of insult. The contempt which breathes in the terms "man of law" and "man of letters" is confined to the singular. It is perfectly proper, and wounds no one, to say "men of letters" and "lawyers." But in Paris each profession has its fag-end, — its individual followers who drag it down to the level of street practice and to the demands of the body of the people. Thus the "man of law," the pettifogger, is to be found in certain quarters; just as we find the money-lender making loans by the week in the vicinity of the markets, — an individual who is to the realm of banking what Monsieur Fraisier was to the bar. It is curious to observe that the common people are as much in awe of the better class of the legal profession as they are of a fashionable restaurant. They go to the pettifogger just as they drink at a wine-shop. To keep at their own level is the rule of all classes in the social sphere. It is only exceptional natures who desire to climb the heights, who feel no degradation in the presence of superiors, who make for themselves a place, — as Beaumarchais let fall the watch of a nobleman, intending to humble him.

But such parvenus, especially those who are clever enough to hide their beginnings, are splendid exceptions to the rule.

The next day, at six o'clock in the morning, Madame Cibot reconnoitred the house in the rue de la Perle where her future counsellor, the Sieur Fraisier, man of law, had taken up his abode. It was one of the old houses inhabited by the lesser bourgeoisie of former days, and was entered by a narrow passage. The ground-floor — occupied partly by the porter's lodge, and partly by the shop of a cabinet-maker, whose work-rooms and warehouses incumbered the whole of the little inner courtyard — was divided in two by the passage and the well of the staircase, from whose walls dampness had thrown out the saltpetre. The house looked as if it had the leprosy.

Madame Cibot went straight to the lodge, where she found a fellow-porter of Cibot's, a shoemaker, with a wife and two young children, living in a space ten feet square, lighted from the little court-yard. A cordial understanding was set up between the two women so soon as Madame Cibot had announced her occupation, given her name, and spoken of her house in the rue de Normandie. After a quarter of an hour employed in preliminary gossip, — during which time the wife was getting ready the breakfast of the shoemaker and the two children, — Madame Cibot led the conversation to the tenants, and spoke of the man of law.

"I have come to consult him," she said, "on business. One of his friends, Monsieur le docteur Poulain, sent me here. You know Monsieur Poulain?"

"I should think so!" said the portress of the rue de

la Perle. "He saved my little girl when she had the croup."

"He saved me too, ma'am. What sort of man is this Monsieur Fraisier?"

"He is a man, my dear lady, from whom at the end of the month it is very difficult to wring the money for carrying up his letters."

That answer was quite sufficient for the intelligent Cibot.

"People can be poor and honest," she said.

"I hope so," answered Fraisier's portress. "As for us, we don't roll in silver or gold, or even copper; but we have n't a farthing that belongs to others."

In these words the Cibot recognized her own sentiments.

"Well, any how," she said, "you think I may trust him?"

"Ah! when Monsieur Fraisier does mean well by any one, I 've heard Madame Florimond say he had n't his equal."

"Why did n't she marry him?" asked Madame Cibot quickly. "She owed him her fortune. It would n't be a bad thing for a petty shopkeeper who had been kept by an old man to marry a lawyer."

"Do you want to know why?" said the portress, drawing Madame Cibot into the passage. "You 're going up to him, are n't you? Well, you 'll know why as soon as you get into his room."

The staircase, lighted from the courtyard by windows whose sashes pushed up and down, showed plainly that the tenants, with the exception of the owner and Monsieur Fraisier, were mechanics by trade. The muddy

stairs bore traces of all their callings, in the shape of broken buttons, fragments of tin, scraps of gauze, bits of straw matting, and the like. The apprentices on the upper floors had scrawled obscene caricatures upon the walls. The last words of the portress excited the curiosity of Madame Cibot, and very naturally decided her to consult this friend of Doctor Poulain, reserving to herself the choice of employing him after she had formed an opinion of him.

"I wonder sometimes how Madame Sauvage can stay in his service," said the portress by way of commentary, as she followed Madame Cibot. "I accompany you, ma'am," she added, "because I have to carry up the milk and the newspaper of my proprietor."

When they reached the second floor above the entresol, Madame Cibot found herself face to face with a door of a villanous description. The paint, a mongrel red, was plastered with a layer of black dirt a foot square, such as the hands deposit after a certain length of time and which architects attempt to counteract in the better class of houses by putting glass shields above and below the locks. The wicket of the door, choked with dusty cobwebs (like those that caterers collect to give the look of age to their wine-bottles), served no purpose except to justify the nickname of "the prison-door," — a name that was sustained, moreover, by the trefoil iron work, the formidable hinges, and the huge nail-heads with which the door was studded. Some miser, or some pamphleteer at war with all the world, must have invented such defensive apparatus. A leaden gutter through which the waste-water of each household was poured added its quota to the evil savors of the

staircase, whose ceilings were decorated with arabesques sketched in candle-smoke. And what arabesques! The bell-rope, at the end of which hung a filthy brass olive, rang a little bell, whose feeble tinkle betrayed a crack in its metal. Every surrounding object added some touch in harmony with the general effect of this hideous picture.

The Cibot heard the noise of a heavy step and the asthmatic breathing of a powerful woman; and then Madame Sauvage revealed herself. She was one of those old women of whom Adrien Brauwer had a vision when he drew his "Witches starting for their Sabbath," — a woman five feet six inches tall and unhealthily fat, with the face of a grenadier and far more beard than Madame Cibot could show, arrayed in a frightful gown of the cheapest cotton fabric, with a bandanna round her head and curl-papers made of her master's old prospectuses, wearing in her ears gold rings that were in the shape of carriage-wheels. This female cerberus held in her hand a small tin saucepan, much indented, from which the dripping milk wafted an additional odor upon the staircase, where its nauseous sour fumes mingled with the other smells.

"What may you want, ma'am?" demanded Madame Sauvage, as she flung a menacing glance at the Cibot, whom she thought too well dressed, — a glance all the more murderous because her eyes were naturally bloodshot.

"I came to see Monsieur Fraisier, from his friend Doctor Poulain."

"Oh, come in, ma'am!" returned the Sauvage in a tone suddenly reduced to amiability, proving that she had been told to expect this early visit.

Then, after making a theatrical courtesy, the semi-male servant of Monsieur Fraisier abruptly opened the door of an office looking upon the street, in which sat the former barrister of Mantes. This study was exactly like all the little offices of third-class lawyers, where the shelves and boxes are of painted black wood, and the digests, in true clerical fashion, are so old as to be covered with the cobwebs of antiquity, where the red tape straggles down with lamentable untidiness, where the floor is gray with dust, the ceiling yellow with smoke, and the paper-boxes smell of the gambols of mice. The mirror on the chimney-piece was dim; the fire-dogs, of cast iron, held a meagre log; the clock, of modern marquetry, was worth about sixty francs, and had been bought in at some sale made by legal authority; the candlesticks, which flanked the clock, were of pewter, though they pretended to rococo shapes that were badly rendered, and the painting in various places had peeled off and exposed the metal. Monsieur Fraisier, a small and sickly looking man with a red face, and blotches which proclaimed his vitiated blood, who was perpetually scratching his right arm, and wore a wig set far back on his head, leaving to view a brick-colored skull of sinister expression, now rose from a cane arm-chair where he was seated on a circular cushion of green morocco. He assumed a polite manner and a fluted voice, saying, as he pushed forward a chair, —

"Madame Cibot, I believe."

"Yes, monsieur," answered the woman, who suddenly lost her habitual assurance; she was scared by the voice, which sounded a good deal like the door-bell,

and also by a glance which was even more lividly green than the greenish eyes of her future adviser. The office was so redolent of its Fraisier that the very atmosphere might be called pestilential. Madame Cibot at once understood why Madame Florimond had refused to become Madame Fraisier.

"Poulain spoke to me of you, my good lady," said the man of law in the falsetto tones that people vulgarly term "mincing," but which kept their sharp and acrid qualities like a *vin-du-pays*.

Here he attempted to cover himself up by drawing over his sharp knees, which were clothed with some threadbare woollen stuff, the two sides of an old dressing-gown made of printed calico, from which the wadding took the liberty of oozing through numerous rents; but the weight of this wadding dragged down the flaps and exposed to view a close-fitting under-shirt, now black with wear. After tightening, with a foppish air, the cords of the refractory garment so as to show the slenderness of his waist, Fraisier took the tongs and put together two bits of burned wood which had long avoided each other, like quarrelsome brothers. Then, seized with a sudden idea, —

"Madame Sauvage!" he cried.

"Well!"

"I am not at home to any one."

"Lord! I know that," answered the virago in a domineering tone.

"That's my old foster-mother," said the man of law, somewhat confused, to Madame Cibot.

"She ain't no beauty," replied his visitor.

Fraisier laughed, and slid the bolt of the door, to

make sure that his housekeeper should not come and interrupt the Cibot's confidences.

"Well, madame, explain your business," he said, sitting down, and again trying to drape his dressing-gown over his knees. "Any one who is recommended to me by the sole friend I have in the world may count upon me — yes, absolutely."

Madame Cibot talked for half an hour before the man of law allowed himself to utter one word of interruption; he had the air of a young soldier listening to a veteran of the Old Guard. This silence and Fraisier's submissive air, together with the attention he seemed to lend to her flux of gabble, specimens of which we have already heard in the Cibot's conversations with poor Pons, caused that suspicious female to forget some of the precautions which the ignoble surroundings of the man had suggested to her. When she paused, expecting advice, the little lawyer, whose green eyes with black speckles had been studying his future client, was suddenly seized with what is called a "graveyard cough," and had recourse to an earthenware bowl full of herb-tea, which he emptied.

"If it had n't been for Poulain, I should be dead already, my dear Madame Cibot," Fraisier replied to the motherly glance she cast upon him. "He has given me back my health."

He seemed to have lost all remembrance of his client's tale, and she began to think of leaving a man evidently in such a dying state.

"Madame, in all matters of bequest or inheritance it is necessary to be sure of two things before proceeding to take any steps," he said at last, — "first, is the

property worth taking any trouble about; secondly, who are the legal heirs? for if the bequest is the booty, the heirs are the enemy."

Madame Cibot told about Rémonencq and Élie Magus, and said the two wily confederates had valued the pictures at six hundred thousand francs.

"Will they pay that price for them?" asked the late barrister of Mantes. "For you see, madame, men of business don't believe in pictures. What is a picture? Forty sous worth of canvas, or a hundred thousand francs worth of paint. The hundred-thousand-franc paintings are very well known, — though there's many a fancy price put upon them, even on the most famous. A well-known moneyed man, whose gallery was much lauded and visited and engraved, — actually engraved! — was thought to have spent millions upon it. He died, — for people do die; and behold, his *genuine* masterpieces did n't fetch two hundred thousand francs! You must bring me your connoisseurs. Now let us hear about the heirs."

And Fraisier resumed his attitude of attention. When he heard the name of the president Camusot, he shook his head with a grimace which made Madame Cibot pay extreme attention to him. She tried to read that brow, that infamous countenance, and felt she had to do with a masked battery.

"Yes, my good monsieur," she repeated, "my Monsieur Pons is own cousin to the president Camusot de Marville; he's everlastingly prating to me of the relationship. The first wife of Monsieur Camusot, the great silk-dealer — "

"The one they have just made peer of France — "

"— was a demoiselle Pons, first cousin to Monsieur Pons."

"Therefore the Camusot de Marvilles are first cousins once removed—"

"They are nothing at all, for they've quarrelled with him."

Monsieur Camusot de Marville, before coming to Paris, had been for five years, as we know, president of the justice-courts at Mantes. Not only was he well remembered there, but he continued to hold relations with the place; for his successor, the judge with whom he was most intimate during his stay, was still president of the court, and consequently knew Fraisier through and through.

"Are you aware, madame," said the latter, when Madame Cibot had closed the red sluice-gates of her inundating mouth, "are you aware that you will have as your chief enemy a man who sends people to the scaffold?"

The Cibot gave a leap on her chair which made her look like the toy called a jack-in-the-box.

"Be calm, my dear lady," resumed Fraisier. "Nothing more natural than that you should n't know what the president of the Cour-royale in Paris really is; but you ought to have known that Monsieur Pons has a legal heir and next of kin. Monsieur le président de Marville is the sole heir of your patient; but he is collateral in the third degree, therefore, according to law, Monsieur Pons has the right to leave his property to whom he will. You seem not to know that the daughter of Monsieur de Marville married, about six weeks ago, the eldest son of Monsieur le comte Popinot, peer

of France, formerly minister of commerce and agriculture, one of the most influential men in the politics of the day. This marriage makes the president even more formidable than he is as sovereign of the assizes."

The Cibot shuddered at the word.

"Yes, it is he who sends you there," said Fraisier. "Ah! my dear lady, you don't know what a red robe is. It is bad enough to have a black one like mine. If you see me as I am to-day, ruined, blighted, dying, it is because I once unconsciously ran against a little provincial *procureur-du-roi*. I was forced to sell my practice for a song, and was happy to escape with the loss of my whole fortune. If I had attempted to resist I could n't have kept my professional status. And there 's another thing you don't seem to know. If the matter concerned president Camusot alone, it might be managed; but he has a wife, let me tell you! and if you were face to face with that woman, you would tremble as if you had one foot on the scaffold, and your hair would stand on end. Madame de Marville is vindictive enough to spend ten years in coiling a net about you in which you would perish. She drives her husband just as a child spins its top. She once caused a charming young fellow to commit suicide in the Conciergerie, and turned the hair of a count white, with an accusation of forgery; she came near causing one of the greatest nobles of the court of Charles X. to be deprived of his civil rights, and she actually procured the overthrow of the *procureur-général*, Monsieur de Grandville."

"He that lives in the rue Vieille du Temple, at the corner of the rue Saint-François?" said Madame Cibot.

"The same. They say she wants to make her hus-

band minister of justice; and I'm not sure that she won't get her ends. If she took it into her head to send us both to the assizes and to the galleys, I, who am as innocent as the babe unborn, I should at once get a passport and take ship for the United States ; so well do I know what 'justice' means. Madame de Marville has stripped herself and her husband of all their property so as to marry her only daughter to the young Vicomte Popinot (who is to be, they say, the heir of your proprietor, Monsieur Pillerault) ; and the end of it is that they are reduced to live on the president's salary. You may believe me, my dear lady, under the circumstances, Madame de Marville won't let your Monsieur Pons's property escape her. I'd rather face a battery of guns loaded with grapeshot than feel I had such a woman against me."

"But," insisted the Cibot, "they 've quarrelled."

"What does that signify?" said Fraisier. "All the more reason! To kill a relation you quarrel with, that's one thing; but to inherit his property, that's another,— it's a pleasure."

"But the good man has a holy horror of his relations. He keeps telling me that those people — I remember their names, Monsieur Cardot, Monsieur Berthier, and the rest — have crushed him as you'd crush an egg under a tumbril."

"Do you want to be crushed in the same way?"

"Good God!" exclaimed the woman. "Ah! Madame Fontaine was right when she said I'd meet with obstacles; but, after all, she said I'd succeed."

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot. You may possibly squeeze thirty thousand francs out of this

affair; but as to inheriting the property, you must put that out of your head. Poulain and I talked over your affair last night — "

Here Madame Cibot gave another leap in her chair.

"Hey! What's the matter?"

"If you know all about it, what have you let me talk like a magpie for?"

"Madame Cibot, I knew all about your affair, but I did n't know all about Madame Cibot! Every client has his or her own nature."

Thereupon Madame Cibot cast upon her future counsel a singular look, in which all her suspicions burst forth; and Fraisier intercepted the look.

XIX.

FRAISIER'S SECRET INTENTION.

"I RESUME," said Fraisier. "You see you formerly put our friend Poulain into relations with old Monsieur Pillerault, the great uncle of Madame la comtesse Popinot; and that's one of your claims to my services. Poulain goes to see your proprietor every two weeks (now, remark this!), and he has learned all these details from him. This old merchant was at the marriage of his great-great-nephew (for he is an uncle of expectations; he has an income of some fifteen thousand francs, and for the last twenty-five years he has lived like a monk, — has n't spent a thousand crowns a year). He told Poulain about the marriage. It appears that all this fuss arose because your old man, the musician, tried, out of revenge, to disgrace the Marville family. There are two sides to a shield; your sick man may call himself innocent, but other people think him a monster."

"I should n't be a bit surprised if he was," cried the Cibot. "Just imagine! Here 's ten years that I 've been paying out my savings on him, and he knows it; and he ain't willing to name me in his will, — no, monsieur, he ain't; he 's as obstinate as a mule about it. I 've talked at him for ten days, and the old cur don't budge no more than the trey in a lottery. He don't

open his lips; he just stares at me — with such an air! The most I can get out of him is that he'll recommend me to Monsieur Schmucke."

"Does he mean to make a will in favor of this Monsieur Schmucke?"

"He's going to leave him everything."

"Now, listen, my dear Madame Cibot. In order to have any just ideas and to make any plan at all, I must know this Monsieur Schmucke, I must see the collection which you say is the bulk of the property, and I must have a conference with that Jew you mentioned; and then you must let me direct you."

"We'll see about that, my good Monsieur Fraisier."

"What do you mean, — see about it?" said Fraisier, shooting a venomous glance at the Cibot, and speaking in his natural voice. "Am I, or am I not, your counsel? Let's understand each other."

The Cibot felt that he had taken her measure, and cold chills ran down her back.

"You have my entire confidence," she answered, feeling herself at the mercy of a tiger.

"We lawyers are accustomed to being betrayed by our clients. Look well at your position: it is splendid! If you follow my advice in every particular, you shall have — I'll guarantee it — thirty or forty thousand francs out of that property. But remember, there are two sides to the finest coin. Suppose Madame de Marville finds out that Monsieur Pons's property is worth a million, and that you want a slice of it? — There are always persons — ready — to tell these things," he said, in a parenthesis.

This parenthesis, slowly delivered, with two pauses,

made the Cibot shudder; and she instantly thought that Fraisier himself was ready to make the revelation.

"— My dear client, in ten minutes she could make Monsieur Pillerault turn you out of your situation at an hour's notice!"

"What harm would that do me?" said the Cibot, springing to her feet like a Bellona. "I should still be the housekeeper of my two gentlemen."

"Yes, and seeing that, she would lay a trap for you; and you would wake up some fine morning in a dungeon, — you and your husband, — accused of a capital crime!"

"I!" shrieked the Cibot. "I, who have n't got a penny of other people's property! I! I! —"

And she talked on for five minutes, while Fraisier watched this great artist executing her concerto of self-praise. He was cold and satirical; his eye pierced the woman like a stiletto. Inwardly he was laughing, and his dry wig shook. He was Robespierre in the days when the French Sylla wrote verses.

"Why? And how? Under what pretext?" she cried, as she ended her oration.

"Do you want to know how you can be brought to the guillotine?"

The Cibot turned as pale as death. The phrase fell upon her neck like the knife of the law, and she looked wildly at Fraisier.

"Now listen to me, my dear child," resumed Fraisier, checking a movement of satisfaction which the woman's terror caused him.

"I 'd rather let the whole thing go," murmured the Cibot.

And she tried to rise.

"Stop! — for you ought to see your own danger. I owe it to you to tell you the truth," said Fraisier imperiously. "The scheme is a battle; and you will be carried farther than you think for. You'll get drunk on the idea, and strike hard — "

Another gesture of denial from Madame Cibot, who came near choking.

"Come, come, my little mother," said Fraisier with horrible familiarity, "you'll go pretty far — "

"Do you take me for a thief?"

"You've got a receipt from Monsieur Schmucke that did n't cost you much. Ha, ha! my fine woman, you are here in a confessional! Don't try to deceive your confessor, — above all when that confessor can read your heart!"

The Cibot was terrified at the insight of the man, and now understood the meaning of the close attention with which he had listened to her.

"Well," said Fraisier, "you must admit that Madame de Marville won't let you outrun her in the race for the property. You'll be suspected; you'll be watched. You'll succeed in getting into your gentleman's will: very good! And some fine morning Justice will step in, and get hold of some herb-tea, and find arsenic in the dregs; and you and your husband will be arrested, tried, and condemned, for having attempted to kill the sieur Pons, before you've had a chance to touch your legacy. I defended a poor woman at Versailles who was as innocent as you would be in a like case. Matters went just as I tell you; and all I could do for her was to save her life. The poor thing

had twenty years of hard labor, and is now in Saint-Lazare."

The terror of Madame Cibot was at its height. Pale as a ghost, she looked at the pinched little man with the livid green eyes as some poor Moorish woman, faithful to her religion, might have looked at the Inquisitors when she heard them condemn her to the stake.

"Do you say, my good Monsieur Fraisier, that if I follow your advice, and trust my interests to you, that I shall get something without nothing to fear?"

"I will guarantee you thirty thousand francs," said Fraisier, feeling sure of his ground.

"Well, now, you know how I love that dear Monsieur Poulain," she said in her most wheedling tone. "It was he who told me to come and see you; and the worthy man did n't send me here to be told I should be guillotined as a poisoner."

She burst into tears, for the very idea of the guillotine made her flesh creep; her nerves were strained, terror gripped her heart, and she lost her self-control. Fraisier enjoyed his triumph. When he perceived her momentary hesitation and the danger of losing his chance, he made up his mind to master the woman, terrify her, stupefy her, and hold her at his mercy, bound hand and foot. The Cibot, who had entered the office as a fly flutters into a spider's web, was destined to stay there, netted, entangled, and used as provender for the ambition of the man of law. In fact, Fraisier was resolved to get the support of his declining years, ease, happiness, and public consideration out of this affair. It had been calmly and soberly gone over in all its bearings, examined as it were with a magnifying-glass, by himself

and Poulain, the preceding evening. The doctor had sketched Schmucke to his friend, and their shrewd minds at once sounded the depths of all hypotheses, and took into account the dangers as well as the resources of the enterprise. Fraisier, with a rush of enthusiasm, exclaimed: "The success of both our lives is in it!" He promised Poulain a place as surgeon-in-chief of a hospital in Paris, just as he promised himself the position of *juge-de-paix* of an arrondissement.

To become a *juge-de-paix!* To this man full of ability, a doctor of law without a gown, it was an object so difficult to attain that he thought of it as the lawyers in the Chamber think of a judge's robe, or the Italian priests of the tiara. The thought seemed folly. The present justice, Monsieur Vitel, before whom Fraisier's cases were called, was a man sixty-nine years old and rather sickly, who thought of retiring from the office; and Fraisier talked to Poulain of becoming his successor just as Poulain talked to Fraisier of a rich heiress whom he meant to marry after he had saved her life. Few persons realize how many eager desires are inspired by the various official stations in Paris. To live in Paris is the first desire of Frenchmen. Let the simplest office become vacant, and a hundred women will rise as one man and work upon all their friends to obtain it. A probable vacancy among the twenty-four tax-collectors of Paris will rouse a perfect riot of ambition in the Chamber of Deputies. Such places are in the gift of the government, and are made an affair of state. The salary of a *juge-de-paix* in Paris is about six thousand francs a year, and the registration of that office brings in at least a hundred thousand more. It

is one of the most coveted posts in the legal profession. Fraisier, appointed *juge-de-paix*, and the friend of the surgeon-in-chief of a great hospital, could marry wealth and help Poulain to do likewise; it would be a mutual lending of hands. The night had passed its leaden roller over these dreams of the late barrister of Mantes, and a formidable scheme had germinated and sprouted, fertile in promise and full of intrigues. The Cibot was the pin-bolt of the drama. The effect of the sudden revolt of that implement may therefore be imagined. Fraisier had not foreseen it; but the man of law promptly crushed the bold effort at escape, by bringing to bear upon the woman the whole force of his venomous nature.

"My dear Madame Cibot, don't be troubled," he said, taking her hand.

His own hand, cold as the skin of a snake, produced a terrible impression on Madame Cibot, and caused a physical reaction which checked her agitation; the toad Astaroth of Madame Fontaine seemed to her less dangerous to touch than that poison-phial before her, capped with a red wig, and whose voice was like the creaking of a door.

"Don't think I've frightened you without cause," resumed Fraisier, who observed this fresh movement of repulsion. "The circumstances which have made Madame de Marville's terrible reputation are so well known at the Palais-de-Justice, that any one you choose to ask will tell you about them. The great noble who was so nearly deprived of his civil rights is the Marquis d'Espard. The Marquis d'Esgrignon is the one that just escaped the galleys. The gallant young man, rich, handsome, and full of promise, who was to have

married a daughter of one of the first families in France, but who hanged himself in a cell at the Conciergerie, was the celebrated Lucien de Rubempré, whose fate roused all Paris for the time being. It was connected with the bequest of his mistress, the famous Esther, who left him several millions, and he was accused of having poisoned her. The young poet was absent from Paris at the time the woman died, and did not even know he was her heir. No one could be more innocent than that. Well, after he had undergone an examination by the president, Camusot de Marville, he hanged himself in his cell. Justice, like the healing art, has its victims: in the one case you die for society; in the second, for science," added Fraisier, letting a hideous smile flicker on his lips. "Well, you see I know all the dangers. I've been ruined by justice, — I, a poor little obscure lawyer. My experience has cost me dear, and I put it at your service."

"My God! no, thank you!" said the Cibot; "I give up the whole thing. I don't want nothing but my dues. I've been an honest woman these thirty years, monsieur. My Monsieur Pons did say he'd recommend me in his will to his friend Monsieur Schmucke. Well, I'll end my days in peace with that good German."

Fraisier had overshot his mark; he had discouraged the Cibot, and was obliged to efface the dreadful impression he had made upon her.

"Don't let us despair," he said; "go your own way quietly. Don't be afraid; we will bring the affair through safely."

"Then tell me what I'm to do, my good Monsieur Fraisier. How am I to get my annuity, and —"

"—feel no remorse?" he said quickly, cutting short her words. "To manage such matters is precisely what lawyers were invented for. People can't deal with these things unless legally. You don't know the law; I do. With me you've got it on your side; you will get your rights peaceably, in sight of all men. As for your conscience, that's your own affair."

"Well, go on," said Madame Cibot, made happy and inquisitive by these words.

"I can't say more at present. I have not studied the affair in all its bearings; so far, I have only considered the obstacles. The first step, of course, is to induce Pons to make a will: you can't go wrong there. But above all, let us know at once whom he means to make his heir; for if he leaves his money to you—"

"No, he won't; he don't like me! Ah! if I'd known the value of his gimcracks, and if I'd only suspected what he told me the other day about his love-affairs, I should n't be a bit uneasy now."

"Well," said Fraisier, "do you go on as usual. Dying folks have queer fancies, my dear Madame Cibot; they upset all expectation. Let him make his will, and we'll see what comes of it. But, first of all, there must be a valuation of the property. You must put me in communication with the Jew and with that Rémonencq; they will be very useful to us. Trust me; I am yours. I am the friend of my client through thick and thin, when he is mine. Friend or foe; that's my nature."

"Well, I'll be yours," said the Cibot. "And about your fees; Monsieur Poulain will—"

"Don't mention them," said Fraisier. "Be careful

to keep Poulain in attendance on the patient; the doctor has the purest and most loyal heart that I know, and we need — don't you see? — a trustworthy man. Poulain is worth a dozen of me; I 've grown wicked."

"You look as if you had," said the Cibot; "but I 'll trust you all the same."

"And you 'll do right!" he said. "Come and see me whenever anything happens, and keep on as you are doing now. You are a clever woman, and things will turn out well."

"Adieu, dear Monsieur Fraisier; good health to you! Your servant!"

Fraisier accompanied his client to the door, and there — just as Madame Cibot herself had done the night before to the doctor — he said his final word:

"If you could induce Monsieur Pons to seek my advice, it would be so much gained."

"I 'll try to do so," said the Cibot.

"My good woman," continued Fraisier, drawing her back within the study, "I am very well acquainted with Monsieur Trognon, the notary, — the notary, you know, of the whole neighborhood. If Monsieur Pons has n't a notary, speak to him about Trognon; see that he employs him."

"I see!" returned Madame Cibot.

As she moved away she heard the rustle of petticoats and the sound of a heavy foot trying to step lightly. Once alone and in the street, Madame Cibot, after walking some little distance, recovered her freedom of thought. Though she remained under the influence of this conference, and was still in terror of justice, judges, and the scaffold, she took a very natural resolution,

which, sooner or later, was to bring her secretly in conflict with her terrible adviser.

"Hey!" she said to herself, "what do I want partners for? I'll line my own pockets first, and then, may be, I'll take what they offer me to serve their own interests."

This resolution was fated, as we shall see, to hasten the end of the unhappy musician.

XX.

MADAME CIBOT AT THE THEATRE.

"WELL, my dear Monsieur Schmucke," said the Cibot, entering the appartement, "and how 's our dear love of a patient?"

"Ferry pad!" answered the German; "Bons has peen vlighdy all naight."

"What did he say?"

"Only zduff and nonzenze! He zay he leaf me his broberdy, — on gondission dat noding pe zold. And he gried, boor man, he gried! It prakes my heart!"

"That 'll all pass off, my lamb!" said Madame Cibot. "I've kept you waiting for your breakfast; here it is nine o'clock! But don't you scold me; I 've been mighty busy, all about your affairs. For, you see, there was n't no money, and I 've had to raise some."

"How tid you?" asked Schmucke.

"Why, my uncle!"

"Your ungle!"

"Up the spout."

"Z-bout?"

"Oh, the dear man, if he ain't innocent! You 're a saint, an angel, an archbishop o' purity, a man to stuff and keep in a glass-case, as that old actor used to say. Here you 've been in Paris and you 've seen — what have n't you seen? — the Revolution o' July — and

you don't know what a pawnbroker is! He's the man who lends you money on your clothes and things. I've just taken him all our silver forks and spoons; eight on 'em, with bead edges. Bah! Cibot must eat his food with that Algiers metal; they say it's all the fashion. 'Tain't worth while to tell our dear cherub nothing about it: 't would only worret him and turn him yellower nor what he is; he's fretted enough a'ready. Let's save him first, and think about the money afterwards. Take it easy, and swim with the stream; fit your back to the burden, you know. Ain't that true?"

"Goot anchel! Zubleeme heart!" cried poor Schmucke, taking Madame Cibot's hand and laying it on his own heart with an expression of much feeling.

The angel raised her eyes to heaven and showed the tears in them.

"Come, come, be done, Papa Schmucke! You're a funny man! That's coming it a little strong. I ain't nothing only a woman o' the people, and my heart's in my hand. Yes, I've got something here!" she cried, striking her breast, "as well as you; though you've both o' you got hearts of gold."

"Baba Schmucke!" exclaimed the old pianist, much moved. "Ah! I zuffer zuch cri-ef, my dears are ploot. I bray to Heaven zo mooch, zo mooch, I haf no laife left; I gan nefer zurfife Bons!"

"Goodness! I believe you. You'll kill yourself, my poor love!"

"Lof!"

"Well, yes, my little son."

"Zone!"

"My darling, then, if you like it better."

"I toan'd know vat you zay."

"Well, well, you let me take care of you, and you do what I tell you! If you don't, I shall have two sick men to look after. According to my ideas, we 've got to divide the nursing between us. You can't give no more lessons. It tires you out, and you ain't fit for nothing here, where you 'll have to sit up nights, remember; for Monsieur Pons, he 's going from bad to worse. Had n't I better call round on all your pupils to-day and tell 'em you are ill? and then you 'll be able to sit up with our dear lamb, and sleep from five in the morning till, say, two in the afternoon. I 'll do the hardest nursing, — that 's in the daytime; because then I 've got to get your breakfast and dinner, and take care of the patient, and get him up and change him, and give him his medicines. To go on as I 'm doing now, I could n't stand it ten days longer nohow. Here 's thirty days I 've been ready to drop. What would become of both o' you if I was to fall ill again? And if you did? Goodness! it 's enough to make one shiver. Look how you 're all used up just for nothing but taking care o' monsieur last night."

She led Schmucke to a mirror, and he saw how changed he was.

"So, if you 'll be guided by me, I 'll get you your breakfast in a trice, and you can watch the dear man two hours. Then, if you give me a list of the pupils, I 'll go round and see 'em all, and you 'll be at liberty for a couple o' weeks. You shall go to bed as soon as ever I get back, and sleep till evening."

This proposal was so judicious that Schmucke agreed at once.

"Mum to Monsieur Pons, you know, for he'd think he was dead if we told him he must give up the theatre and his lessons. The poor man would fancy he could n't get back his pupils, or some such nonsense. Monsieur Poulain says we can't save our dear Benjamin if we don't keep his mind easy."

"Yes, yes; mek de preakfast, and I vill mek a lizde and gif you de at-tresses. You are raight; I know dat."

An hour later, the Cibot, in her Sunday best, departed, to the amazement of Rémonencq, in a *milord*, determined to represent in a suitable manner the confidential housekeeper of the two Nut-crackers in all the schools and to all the private pupils of the two musicians.

It is unnecessary to report the divers discourses, executed like the variations of a theme, into which the Cibot launched in presence of schoolmistresses and in the bosom of families; it will suffice to depict the scene which took place in the official sanctum of the Illustrious Gaudissard, where Madame Cibot penetrated, not without meeting unexpected difficulties. The directors of Parisian theatres are more carefully guarded than kings and ministers. The reason why they erect such strong barriers between themselves and other mortals is not far to seek. Kings defend themselves against ambitions only; but the director of a theatre has the self-love of authors and actors to fear and to escape.

The Cibot, however, overcame all obstacles by the sudden intimacy she set up between herself and the female concierge. Porters have a common ground of recognition, just as men of the various professions have

theirs. Each employment has its shibboleth, as it has its deformities and its scars.

"Ah, madame, you are the doorkeeper of a theatre," the Cibot said; "I'm only the poor concierge of a house in the rue de Normandie, where the leader of your orchestra, Monsieur Pons, lives. Oh! how happy I should be if I had your situation, and could see the actors and the authors and the ballet-dancers coming and going. Why, you've got the marshal's truncheon of our calling, as the old actor said."

"And how is that good Monsieur Pons?" asked the other.

"Very poorly. He has n't been out of his bed these two months. He'll be carried out o' the house feet foremost when he does go, that's certain."

"He'll be a great loss."

"That's so. I've come with a message to your director to explain his condition: can't you manage, my dear, to let me see him?"

"A lady from Monsieur Pons."

It was thus that the valet of the theatre announced Madame Cibot, having received his cue from the doorkeeper. Gaudissard had just arrived for a rehearsal. It so happened that no one was waiting to speak to him, and that the authors of the play and the actors were late. He was delighted to get news of his leader; accordingly, he made a Napoleonic gesture, and the Cibot was ushered in.

The former commercial traveller, now the director of a popular theatre, imposed upon his joint-stock company and cheated it, regarding it much as a man regards a legitimate wife. His financial development had reacted

upon his person. Grown healthy and fat and rosy with prosperity and good living, Gaudissard had frankly emerged as a Mondor.

"We are aiming for Beaujon," he would say, hoping to crack the first joke at his own expense.

"You have n't got beyond Turcaret," retorted Bixiou, who occasionally cut him out in the smiles of the first danseuse at the theatre, the celebrated Héloïse Brisetout. The truth is the ex-Illustrious Gaudissard worked his theatre solely and undisguisedly in his own interests. After insisting on admission as *collaborateur* in the various ballets, vaudevilles, and minor pieces which were played at the theatre, he took advantage of their authors' impecuniosity to buy out the remaining share. These pieces, always added to the bill after the leading play, brought Gaudissard a royalty of several napoleons nightly. He traded by proxy on the sale of the tickets, and claimed a certain number for himself, as the perquisite of his office, which insured him a tithe of the profits. These three sources of managerial revenue, besides the letting of his boxes and the gifts of incompetent actresses who wanted to fill the minor parts and appear as pages or queens, together with his legitimate third of the profits, ran up the total of his gains so enormously that the stock-company, to whom the other two thirds belonged, had obtained little more than a tenth of the actual receipts. Nevertheless that tenth produced an interest of fifteen per cent on its value. Consequently Gaudissard, strong in the support that such a dividend won him, was accustomed to boast of his intelligence, his integrity, his zeal, and the great good fortune of the company. When Comte Popinot, with an appear-

ance of interest, asked Monsieur Matifat, or General Gouraud, Matifat's son-in-law, or Crevel, whether he was satisfied with Gaudissard, Gouraud, lately made peer of France, replied: "They say he cheats us; but he is such a good fellow and so witty, that we are satisfied."

"Then it is like the old fable of La Fontaine," said Comte Popinot, smiling.

Gaudissard employed his capital in business outside of the theatre. He had taken the measure of the Graffs, the Schwabs, and the Brunners, and he invested in the railways the new banking-house was concerned in. Concealing his shrewdness beneath the careless ease and frankness of a roué and a voluptuary, he seemed to think of nothing but his pleasures and his toilet; while in fact he thought of everything, and put to use the vast business experience he had acquired as a commercial traveller. This upstart, who never took himself seriously, lived in a luxurious appartement decorated by an upholsterer, where he gave suppers and fêtes to celebrated people. Ostentatious in all his ways, and liking to do things handsomely, he gave himself out as an easy, accommodating fellow, and seemed the less dangerous because he retained what he called the "patter" of his former calling, to which he had lately added the slang of the green-room. Now, the fashion of actors is to say things bluntly; and the wit that he borrowed from behind the scenes, when added to the lively drollery of a bagman, gave him the air and reputation of an important character. At the present moment he was thinking of selling his theatrical license and "passing," to use his own language, "to other labors." He wished to be the president of a railway, to become a "solid man," a

government official, and to marry Mademoiselle Minard, the daughter of one of the rich mayors of Paris. He hoped to be elected deputy, and to rise, under the auspices of Popinot, to the Council of State.

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" he said, directing upon Madame Cibot his managerial glance.

"Monsieur, I am the confidential housekeeper of Monsieur Pons."

"Ah, indeed! And how is he, the dear fellow?"

"Ill, very ill, monsieur."

"The devil! I'm deucedly sorry; I'll go and see him, for he is one of those rare men—"

"Ah, yes, indeed, monsieur! a real cherub. I sometimes ask myself how such a man can belong to a theatre."

"Madame, the theatre is a place for the improvement of morals," said Gaudissard. "Poor Pons! there 's a model man! and such talent! When do you think he can get back to his post? For a theatre, unfortunately, is like a stage-coach, and starts, full or empty, at the regular hour. We may be as sorry as we like, but that won't lead the music. Come, how is he really?"

"Alas! my good monsieur," said the Cibot, pulling out her handkerchief and putting it to her eyes, "it is dreadful to have to say it, but I'm afraid we've got to lose him; though we take care of him, Monsieur Schmucke and me, like the apple of our eye. And I've even come to tell you that you must n't count no more on Monsieur Schmucke, who has got to sit up nights. We can't help doing as if there was still a chance, and trying to tear the dear, good man from the jaws o' death; but the doctor has n't no hope."

"What is he dying of?"

"Grief and jaundice and the liver, and all complicated with family troubles."

"And a doctor to boot!" cried Gaudissard. "He ought to have employed our Doctor Lebrun; it would not have cost him anything."

"Monsieur has a doctor like the good God himself. But what can a doctor do, talent or no talent, against such a lot o' causes?"

"I wanted those good old Nut-crackers for my new fairy-piece —"

"Is it anything I can do for them?" said Madame Cibot, with an air worthy of Jocrisse.

Gaudissard burst out laughing.

"Monsieur, I'm their confidential housekeeper; there's many things these gentlemen —"

As Gaudissard's peals of laughter resounded through the room, a woman's voice cried out, —

"If you are laughing, old fellow, I suppose I can come in?"

And the first danseuse made an irruption into the room and flung herself upon the only sofa that was in it. This was Héloïse Brisetout, wrapped in a magnificent scarf, called Algerine.

"What are you laughing at? Is it at madame? What rôle does she want?" said the lady, flinging him one of those masonic glances from artist to artist which ought to be painted on canvas.

Héloïse, a highly literary young woman of much renown in Bohemia, intimate with the great artists, elegant, delicate, and graceful, possessed very much more mind than usually belongs to a leading ballet-dancer.

As she asked her questions she inhaled the pungent perfume of a vinaigrette.

"Madame, all women are equal when they 're handsome; and if I don't sniff at a nasty scent-bottle, or plaster a lot o' brick-dust on my cheeks —"

"With what Nature has put there already you 'd be supersaturated, my child," said Héloïse, winking at the director.

"I 'm an honest woman —"

"So much the worse for you," said Héloïse. "It is n't every woman who can be well kept; but I am, madame, and devilishly well too!"

"What do you mean, 'so much the worse'? It is very fine for you to have Algerine scarfs round your neck and to give yourself airs," said the Cibot; "but you 've never had half the declarations o' love that I 've had, ma'am! You could n't hold a candle to the beautiful oyster-girl of the Cadran-Bleu —"

The dancer jumped up suddenly, presented arms, and touched her forehead with the back of her right hand, like a soldier saluting his general.

"What!" cried Gaudissard, "are you that beautiful oyster-woman my father used to tell me about?"

"If that 's the case, madame can't know either the cachuca or the polka; madame must be over fifty years old!" said Héloïse. "Then —" Here the danseuse struck an attitude and declaimed the line, —

"'Be we friends, Cinna!'"

"Come, Héloïse, madame is no match for you; let her alone!"

"Ah! is madame the *nouvelle Héloïse?*" said the Cibot with a mock simplicity that was full of satire.

"Pretty good, my old woman!" cried Gaudissard.

"That's been said a hundred times; the joke's preadamite! Find something better, old lady, or take a cigarette."

"Excuse me, ma'am," said Madame Cibot; "I'm too sad to keep on answering you. My two gentlemen are very ill, and I've pawned everything I've got, even my husband's coats, to feed 'em and save 'em from worreting. Here, you may see the tickets."

"Ha! the farce is turning into drama," cried the beautiful Héloïse; "let's hear about it."

"Madame tumbles from the clouds," said the Cibot, "like —"

"— like a leading fairy," said Héloïse. "I'll prompt you; go on, *médème.*"

"Come, I'm in a hurry," said Gaudissard; "no more nonsense! Héloïse, madame is the housekeeper of our poor leader of the orchestra, who is dying. She has come to say I must not depend on him any longer; I am in a tight place."

"Ah, poor man! well, we must give him a benefit."

"That would ruin him," said Gaudissard. "The next day the hospitals would come down on him for five hundred francs; they never believe in any wants except their own. No, no. Look here, my good woman, since you are evidently running for the *prix Montyon* —" Gaudissard rang a bell; the valet instantly entered. "Tell the cashier to send me a bank-bill of a thousand francs. Sit down, madame."

"Ah, poor woman! — There, she's crying!" ex-

claimed the ballet-dancer. "How dismal! Come, mother, cheer up; we 'll all go and see him! Look here, old fellow," she went on, drawing Gaudissard into a corner, "you want to make me play Ariadne. You are going to marry, and you know I can make you miserable —"

"Héloïse, I have got a heart like a frigate, — copper-bottomed."

"I 'll produce children of yours! I 'll borrow some."

"I have openly declared our attachment."

"Come, be a good fellow, and give Pons's situation to Garangeot, — the lad has talent, but he has n't a six-pence, — do that, and I 'll promise to keep quiet."

"But wait till Pons is dead; the worthy soul may come to life again."

"Oh! as for that, no, monsieur," said the Cibot; "since last evening he 's been out of his head, delirious. Unfortunately, it 'll soon be all over."

"Anyhow, put Garangeot in *pro tem.*," said Héloïse; "he has got the whole Press on his side."

At this moment the cashier entered, holding in his hand two notes of five hundred francs each.

"Give them to madame," said Gaudissard. "Adieu, my good woman! Take care of the dear man, and tell him I 'll go and see him to-morrow, or the day after, — or at any rate as soon as I can."

"You 've got so many irons in the fire," remarked Héloïse.

"Ah! monsieur," cried the Cibot, "hearts like yours ain't nowhere except in a theatre. May God bless you!"

"To whose account am I to put that?" asked the cashier.

"I'll draw a cheque, and you are to charge the sum to the gratuity account."

Before leaving the room Madame Cibot made an elaborate courtesy to the ballet-dancer, and overheard a question which Gaudissard put to his late mistress.

"Is Garangeot capable of getting up the music for the ballet of the Mohicans in ten days? If he can pull me out of that scrape, he shall have the old man's place."

Madame Cibot, better paid for the harm she had done than she would ever have been for her good actions, pocketed the thousand francs and the sums paid for the lessons of the two friends, thus depriving them of all means of existence in the event of Pons recovering his health. By this perfidy she expected to bring about a much-desired result, — the necessity of selling the pictures so coveted by Élie Magus. To contrive this first abstraction, the Cibot had to throw dust in the eyes of the terrible associate she had taken to her arms, the barrister Fraisier, and also to make sure of the entire discretion of Élie Magus and Rémonencq.

As to the Auvergnat, he had been brought by degrees under the dominion of a passion such as men of no education conceive when they come to Paris from the depths of the provinces, with fixed ideas born of the isolation of country life, full of the ignorance of primitive natures, and the savage desires which make the framework of fixed ideas. The virile beauty of Madame Cibot, her vivacity, and her coarse wit, had long attracted the Auvergnat, who wished to carry her off from Cibot and make her his concubine, — a species of bigamy which is much more common in Paris

among the lower classes than people think for. But avarice is a running noose which tightens more and more around the heart, and ends by stifling the reason. Rémonencq, when he valued the payment to Madame Cibot from himself and Élie Magus at forty thousand francs, passed from illicit intentions to crime, and longed to make her his legitimate wife. This love, which was pure speculation, brought him, as he dreamed the long dreams of a smoker, leaning against the lintel of his shop-door, to wish for the death of the little tailor. He saw that in this way he could almost triple his capital, and thought what an excellent saleswoman the Cibot would be, and what a fine figure she would cut in a splendid shop on the boulevard. The two desires intoxicated him. In his dreams he hired a shop on the boulevard de la Madeleine, and filled it with the choicest curiosities of the defunct Pons; he slept on cloth of gold, and saw millions floating upward in the blue fumes of his pipe. And then he woke up face to face with the little tailor, who was always sweeping out the courtyard, the doorway, and the street when the Auvergnat was opening his shop and setting out his wares; for since the illness of Pons, Cibot did his wife's household work. Rémonencq came to consider the sallow, stunted, copper-colored little tailor as the sole obstacle to his prosperity; and he asked himself how he could get rid of him. Madame Cibot was very proud of this growing passion on the part of Rémonencq, for she had reached the age when women at last understand that they are growing old.

One morning the Cibot, on getting up, looked reflectively at Rémonencq, who was arranging the odds and

ends in his shop-window, and she resolved to find out to what lengths his love would carry him.

"Well!" said the Auvergnat, coming toward her, "are things going as you wish?"

"It's you I'm troubled about," returned the Cibot. "You compromise me; all the neighbors can see you making sheep's-eyes at me."

She left her own door and went into the depths of the Auvergnat's shop.

"What an idea!" said Rémonencq.

"Come here; I want to speak to you," she said. "The heirs of Monsieur Pons are bestirring themselves, and they're likely to give us trouble. God knows what'll happen if they send lawyers to stick their noses into things, like a setter-dog. I won't persuade Monsieur Schmucke to sell a few pictures unless you'll promise me to keep the secret — ay! keep it so that with your head on the block you won't tell neither where the pictures came from, nor who sold 'em. Don't you see that when Monsieur Pons is safely dead and buried, nobody will be the wiser if there are only fifty-three pictures instead of sixty-seven? Besides, if they are sold while the old man is living, no one can say nothing."

"Well," said Rémonencq, "it is all the same to me; but Monsieur Élie Magus wants the receipts regular."

"You shall have your receipts, bless you! Do you suppose I'm going to write 'em? Not I; it'll be Monsieur Schmucke. But you must tell your Jew that he is to be as silent as you are," she added.

"We'll be as mute as fishes; silence is in our line. As for me, I know how to read, but I can't write; and

that's why I want a wife clever and educated like you. I, who am always laying by for old age, I want some little Rémonencqs. Come, you leave your Cibot!"

"Here comes your Jew!" said the woman; "now we can settle matters."

"Well, my good lady," said Élie Magus, who called very early in the morning of every third day, to know when he could have the pictures, "how are matters going?"

"Hain't no one been to speak to you about Monsieur Pons and his gimcracks?" demanded the Cibot.

"I have received a letter from a lawyer," answered Élie Magus. "He seemed to be one of those busy-bodies ferreting for business, and I distrust such people; so I did not answer him. At the end of three days he came to see me, and left his card; I told my concierge to say I was out whenever he came again."

"You're a jewel of a Jew!" said the Cibot, who was unaware of the old man's caution. "Well, my lads, in a few days I'll have brought Monsieur Schmucke to sell you six or eight o' them pictures, ten at the most; but on two conditions, — first, absolute secrecy. No matter what happens, I'm not to appear in the business. It is to be Monsieur Schmucke who sends for you; mind that. And it is Monsieur Rémonencq who proposed to Monsieur Schmucke to let you have them. I ain't to have nothing to do with it. You are to pay forty-six thousand francs for the four pictures."

"I agree," said the Jew, with a sigh.

"Very good," said Madame Cibot. "The second condition is, that you are to give me forty-three thou-

sand francs, and buy the pictures with the other three thousand from Monsieur Schmucke: Rémonencq can buy four for two thousand francs, and pay me the surplus. Now, you see, my dear Monsieur Magus, that I 've thrown a mighty good thing in your way, — in yours and Rémonencq's, — on condition of sharing the profits between us. I 'll take you to a lawyer, or the lawyer can come here. You 'll estimate the value of all there is in the collection at the prices you are able to give, so that Monsieur Fraisier may know the value of what the old man has to leave. Only he must not come here before this first sale. You understand? "

" That 's understood," said the Jew; " but it will take time to examine the things and set a price on them."

" You shall have a whole half-day. I 'll manage it; that 's my affair. Talk the matter over between yourselves, my lads, and day after to-morrow the thing shall be done. I 'll go and talk to that Fraisier, for he knows what 's going on here through his friend Doctor Poulain, and it 'll be mighty hard to keep the rascal quiet."

Half way between the rue de Normandie and the rue de la Perle Madame Cibot met Fraisier, who was on his way to see her, so anxious was he to get at what he called the " elements " of the affair.

" I was going to your house," he said.

Fraisier complained that Élie Magus would not see him; but the Cibot dispersed his passing gleam of suspicion by assuring him that Magus had only just got back from a long journey, and that she would arrange an interview in Pons's appartement the day

but one following, for the purpose of valuing the collection.

"Deal openly with me," answered Fraisier; "it is more than likely that I shall be employed by the heirs of Monsieur Pons. In that position I shall be much better able to serve you."

The words were said so incisively that the Cibot trembled. This starveling man of law, she felt, was manœuvring on his side as she was manœuvring on hers; and she resolved to hasten the sale of the pictures. She was not far wrong in her conjecture. The lawyer and the doctor had clubbed together to buy a new suit of clothes for Fraisier, so that he might present himself decently dressed before Madame Camusot de Marville. The time required to make the suit was the sole reason why that interview, on which hung the fate of the two friends, had been delayed. After his visit to Madame Cibot, Fraisier intended to go to the tailor's and try on the coat, waistcoat, and trousers; he found those habiliments finished and ready for use. When he reached home he put on a new wig, and started at ten o'clock in the morning, in a hired cabriolet, for the rue de Hanovre, hoping to obtain an interview with Madame de Marville.

Fraisier in a white cravat, yellow gloves, a new wig, and perfumed with eau-de-portugal, strongly reminded one of certain poisons kept in crystal bottles, the stoppers held down by white kid, whose labels and all else, even the thread around the kid, though tasteful in appearance, only add to one's sense of danger. His peremptory manner, his blotched face, his cutaneous malady, his greenish eyes, his general savor of wicked-

ness, caught the eye like clouds on a blue sky. In his study, as he had appeared to Madame Cibot, he was but the vulgar knife with which an assassin commits a crime; here, at the door of Madame de Marville, he was the elegant poniard a young woman hides in her robe.

XXI.

FRAISIER IN FLOWER.

A GREAT change had taken place in the rue de Hanovre. The Vicomte and Vicomtesse Popinot and the late minister and his wife were unwilling that Monsieur and Madame de Marville should remove into hired appartements and leave the house they had given up to their daughter as part of her *dot*. The president and his wife had accordingly gone up to the second floor, now left vacant by the removal of the old lady its late tenant to end her days in the country. Madame de Marville, who retained Madeleine Vivet, the cook, and the footman, had recovered from the vexation caused by the change, — a vexation somewhat lessened by the possession of a suite of rooms worth four thousand francs a year, and an unembarrassed income of ten thousand more. This *aurea mediocritas*, however, seemed already insufficient to Madame de Marville, who wished her fortune to match her ambition. But the cession of all their property for the sake of marrying their daughter had entailed the loss of the president's vested rights of election. Now, Amélie de Marville was determined to make her husband a deputy; for she never abandoned her plans willingly, and she still did not despair of getting him elected from the arrondissement in which Marville is situated. For the last two months, there-

fore, she had tormented her father-in-law, now Baron Camusot (for the newly created peer of France had been made a baron), to get him to advance a hundred thousand francs on her husband's inheritance, for the purpose, she said, of buying a small domain adjoining that of Marville, which yielded a rental of about two thousand francs. She and her husband could live there, near their children, and the boundaries of the Marville estate would be improved and eventually extended by this purchase. Madame de Marville urged upon her father-in-law the deprivations she was compelled to endure for the sake of marrying Cécile to the Vicomte Popinot, and asked him if he wished to block the way for his eldest son to reach the highest honors in the state, which were now granted only to a powerful parliamentary position, — a position her husband would know how to obtain, if elected to the Chamber, by making himself feared by the ministry.

"Those gentry grant nothing unless you twist their cravats about their necks till their tongues hang out," she said. "They are all ungrateful. They owe everything to Camusot. By enforcing the July laws, Camusot brought about the elevation of the Orleans family."

The old man put her off on the ground that he was involved in railways beyond his present means; and he postponed the donation — of which, however, he admitted the necessity — until an expected rise in stocks should occur.

This half-promise, extorted a few days earlier than the particular time of which we write, had plunged Madame de Marville into much vexation of spirit. It was now doubtful whether the ex-owner of Marville

could be in a condition for election when the new Chamber was formed, as it required one year's ownership of property.

Fraisier succeeded without difficulty in seeing Madeleine Vivet. The two viperous natures recognized at sight their egress from the same egg.

"Mademoiselle," said Fraisier, with specious mildness, "I should like to obtain a few moments' interview with Madame de Marville on a personal matter which concerns her property. Tell her it is a question of inheritance. I have not the honor to be known to her, therefore my name will carry no weight. I am not in the habit of attending to business affairs outside of my office; but I know Madame de Marville's claims to consideration, and I have taken the trouble to come myself — all the more because the subject does not allow of the least delay."

The matter thus broached, then repeated and amplified by the waiting-maid, naturally produced a favorable answer. The moment was a decisive one for Fraisier's two ambitions. Therefore, in spite of the intrepidity of the little provincial lawyer, pugnacious, bitter, and incisive as he was, he felt as all great captains feel at the opening of a battle on which the success of the campaign depends. As he entered Amélie's salon he had what no sudorific, however powerful it might be, was able to produce upon the pores of his skin, choked and palsied as it was with direful diseases, — a cold sweat upon his back and forehead.

"Ah!" he thought, "even if I don't make my fortune, my life is saved; for Poulain told me I should get my health the moment perspiration set in —

Madame," he said, seeing Amélie, who came forward in a loose morning-dress. Fraisier stopped short to bow with that extreme subserviency which, when employed towards government officials, or their families, is intended as a recognition of the superior qualities of the persons addressed.

"Sit down, monsieur," said Madame de Marville, perceiving at once that he belonged to the regions of the law.

"Madame, if I take the liberty to address you on a matter which concerns the interests of Monsieur le président, it is because I feel certain that, in his high position, he is likely to let things take their chance, and thus lose seven or eight hundred thousand francs, — a sum which ladies, who in my opinion know more about private business affairs than judges and public men, are not so ready to despise."

"You mentioned an inheritance," said Amélie, interrupting him.

Dazzled by the sum named, and wishing to hide her astonishment and her delight, she imitated the readers of novels, and looked over to the end of the tale.

"Yes, madame, an inheritance at present lost to you; I may say wholly lost; but which I can, — which I am ready to recover for you — "

"Go on, monsieur," said Madame de Marville, coldly measuring Fraisier with a sagacious eye.

"Madame, I know your eminent talents. I myself come from Mantes. Monsieur Lebœuf, the president of the courts, Monsieur de Marville's friend, can give you information about me — "

Madame de Marville shrugged her shoulders with such cruel significance that Fraisier was compelled to open and shut a parenthesis instantly, in the very beginning of his discourse.

"A woman as distinguished as yourself will at once understand why I speak to you in the first instance of myself. It is the shortest way to secure your inheritance."

Madame de Marville replied to this crafty remark by a gesture only, and kept silence.

"Madame," continued Fraisier, encouraged by the gesture to relate his history, "I was a barrister at Mantes. My practice cost my whole fortune; for I bought that of Monsieur Levroux, whom you doubtless know —"

Madame de Marville bowed her head.

"With a certain sum that was lent to me, and about ten thousand francs of my own, I had just left the employ of Desroches, one of the ablest lawyers in Paris, with whom I had been head-clerk for six years. I had the misfortune to displease the *procureur-du-roi* at Mantes —"

"Olivier Vinet?"

"Yes, madame; the son of the *procureur-général.* He was courting a little woman —"

"He!"

"Madame Vatinelle."

"Ah! Madame Vatinelle. She was very pretty, and very — well known."

"She was intimate with me; *inde iræ*," returned Fraisier. "I was young and active; I wanted to pay off my loan and marry. I had to get business, and I

looked about for it; I soon brewed more for myself than all the other law-officials put together. Of course they were one and all against me, the barristers of Mantes and the notaries, even the sheriffs' officers. They picked quarrels with me. You know very well, madame, that in our vile business when they want to destroy a man it is soon done. They caught me as attorney for both sides of a case. That is rather sharp practice, I admit; but in certain cases it is done in Paris, where lawyers play into each others' hands. It is not done at Mantes. Monsieur Bouyonnet, — for whom I had previously done the same little kindness, — instigated by his associates and encouraged by the *procureur-du-roi*, betrayed me. You see I hide nothing from you. Well, there was a general hue-and-cry. I was a scoundrel; they made me out blacker than Marat! They forced me to sell my practice, and I lost everything. I came to Paris, where I have tried to get clients; but my wretched health only enables me to work two good hours out of the twenty-four. To-day I am reduced to one ambition, and it is a paltry one. You will some day be the wife of the Keeper of the Seals, or perhaps the Chief-justice; but I, poor and feeble, have no other wish than to get some situation in which I may end my days, some post where there is no rise, where I can simply vegetate. I want to be *juge-de-paix* in Paris. It would be a mere trifle for you and Monsieur le président to obtain for me; for you doubtless render the present Keeper of the Seals so uneasy in his situation that he would be glad to oblige you. But that's not all," added Fraisier, seeing that Madame de Marville was about to speak,

and stopping her by a gesture. "I have a friend, who is the physician of the old man whose property you and the president ought to inherit. Now you see what I am coming to. This doctor, whose co-operation is indispensable, is in the same situation as that in which you see me, — a great deal of ability, and no luck! It is through him I heard that your interests were in danger; for at this very moment, as I am speaking to you, all may be over, and the will which disinherits you and Monsieur le président may be made. This doctor is anxious to be appointed surgeon-in-chief of a hospital, or of one of the royal medical colleges. In short, you understand, he must have a situation in Paris the equivalent of mine. Pardon me if I speak frankly of these delicate matters; but this affair will not admit of the slightest ambiguity. This doctor is moreover a man who is well thought of. He saved the life of Monsieur Pillerault, the great-uncle of your son-in-law, Monsieur le Vicomte Popinot. Now, if you will have the goodness to promise me these two places, —*juge-de-paix* for myself, and a medical sinecure for my friend, — I undertake to hand you over your inheritance almost intact. I say 'almost intact' because it will be saddled with a few obligations which we must be under to the legatee and to certain persons whose assistance is positively indispensable. You need not fulful your promises until after I have fulfilled mine."

Madame de Marville, who during the last few moments had crossed her arms, like a person compelled to listen to a sermon, now uncrossed them, looked at Fraisier, and said, —

"Monsieur, you have the merit of making perfectly

clear all that you have to say about your own affairs; but as to mine you are extremely ambiguous — "

"Two words will suffice to enlighten you, madame," returned Fraisier. "Monsieur le président is the sole heir, in the third degree of consanguinity, to Monsieur Pons. Monsieur Pons is very ill, and about to make his will, if he has not already made it, in favor of a German, his friend, named Schmucke; and the value of the property is more than seven hundred thousand francs. In three days I hope to have an exact estimate of the amount."

"If that is so," she said, half aloud, thunderstruck at the possibility of such an inheritance, "what a mistake I made in quarrelling with him and driving him away!"

"No, madame; for if it were not for that rupture, he would still be as lively as a cricket, and would probably outlive you. Providence has its own ways, and we need not look too closely into them." He added, as if to disguise the odious thought, "But we business agents, you know, must look at things as they are. You understand now, madame, that in the high position Monsieur de Marville occupies he would do nothing — indeed he could do nothing — in the present condition of the affair. He has quarrelled mortally with his cousin; you yourself no longer see Pons; you have banished him from your roof, — no doubt you had excellent reasons for doing so, — the old man is now ill, and bequeaths his property to his only friend. A president of the Cour-royale can have nothing to say against a will made under such circumstances. But between ourselves, madame, it is very disagreeable when we

have a right to an inheritance of seven or eight hundred thousand francs — in fact, it may be over a million — to see it taken from under our very nose, and not attempt to get it back. Only, if we make the attempt we must touch pitch and meddle with dirty intrigues. It is a difficult and ticklish thing to manage, and we shall have to rub shoulders with common people, — servants and underlings, — and rub them closely and secretly too, so that no lawyer or notary in Paris can get wind of it. You need a barrister without a brief, like myself, whose abilities are genuine and earnest, whose devotion is secured, and whose position, unhappily precarious, is on a level with that of such people. My business takes me among the lesser tradespeople, the workmen, and the laboring classes of my arrondissement. Yes, madame, that is the position to which I have been reduced by the enmity of the *procureur-du-roi* at Mantes, — a man who could not forgive my superiority. I know you well, madame, I know the solid strength of your protection, and I see that by rendering you this service I shall reach the end of my own misfortunes and secure the triumph of my friend Doctor Poulain."

Madame de Marville remained thoughtful. It was a moment of frightful agony to Fraisier. Vinet, *procureur-général*, — now one of the orators of the Centre, constantly pointed out as a future chancellor, — the father of the *procureur-du-roi* at Mantes, was the antagonist of this relentless woman. The haughty official made no pretence of hiding his contempt for président Camusot. Fraisier was ignorant of this circumstance, however.

"Have you nothing else upon your conscience than the act of being the attorney on both sides?" asked Madame de Marville, looking fixedly at Fraisier.

"Madame may ask Monsieur Lebœuf about me. Monsieur Lebœuf was on my side."

"Are you sure that Monsieur Lebœuf would speak well of you to Monsieur de Marville and Monsieur le comte Popinot?"

"I'll answer for it, especially as Monsieur Olivier Vinet is no longer at Mantes; for, between ourselves, that little magistrate kept the good Lebœuf in perpetual awe of him. Moreover, madame, if you wish it, I will go to Mantes and see Monsieur Lebœuf myself. It will cause no delay, for I can't ascertain the exact value of the property for two or three days. I wish — in fact I *must* conceal from madame some of the wires I have to pull in this affair. But will she not regard the price which I ask for my devotion as a pledge of success?"

"Well, make Monsieur Lebœuf willing to answer for you, and if the property is as large as you say it is (which I doubt), I will promise you the two places, — provided you succeed, of course."

"I will answer for our success, madame, — only you must have the kindness to send for your notary and your attorney whenever I need their assistance. They must give me a power-of-attorney to act for Monsieur le président, and you must tell these gentlemen to follow my instructions and to take no steps without my consent."

"You have the responsibility," said Madame de Marville impressively, "and you ought to have full powers.

But," she added, smiling, "is Monsieur Pons so very ill?"

"Faith! madame, he might recover, especially when cared for by so conscientious a man as Doctor Poulain; for my friend, madame, is only an innocent spy whom I employ in your interests: he would be able to save the old man; but there is another person near the patient, a housekeeper, who for thirty thousand francs is ready to push him into his grave! She won't kill him, she won't give him arsenic: she will do nothing so charitable; she will murder him morally, and drive him into a state of irritable excitement every day. The poor old fellow, if he were in an atmosphere of peace and silence, and were well cared for and kindly treated by friends, would recover. But worn to death by a Madame Évrard (in her youth one of the thirty handsome oyster-women Paris has celebrated), who is grasping, garrulous, and brutal, tormented by her to make a will in which she should have a handsome share, the poor creature is drifting fast and fatally into an induration of the liver, — in fact, the calculi may be already forming, and an operation (which he can't survive) will be necessary to remove them. The doctor — ah, he 's a noble soul! — is in a very painful position; he ought to send away the woman — "

"Such a Megæra is a monster!" exclaimed Madame de Marville in her fluty little voice.

This vocal likeness between himself and the terrible woman made Fraisier smile inwardly; for he knew very well what to think of such soft, hypocritical modulations of a voice that was naturally shrill. He recalled a certain official, the hero of a tale in the days of

Louis XI. whom that monarch put an end to by a sign-manual. This magistrate, blessed with a wife modelled after that of Socrates, but himself without the inward philosophy of that great man, ordered salt to be strewn on the oats of his horses and forbade that they should be allowed any water. When the wife was driving to her country-house along the banks of the Seine the horses rushed into the river to drink, carrying her with them; and the magistrate thanked Providence who had thus released him from his torment by natural means. At this moment Madame de Marville was thanking God for having placed beside Pons a woman who would relieve her of him — *honestly!*

"I would not accept a million," she said, "at the price of an impropriety. Your friend ought to warn Monsieur Pons and have the woman sent away."

"In the first place, madame, Messieurs Pons and Schmucke think the woman an angel, and they would only send away my friend. Then that atrocious oyster-woman has been the doctor's benefactress: she introduced him to Monsieur Pillerault. He tells her to show the utmost gentleness to the patient; but that advice only shows the wretched creature how to make the illness worse."

"What does your friend think of my cousin's state?" asked Madame de Marville.

Fraisier made the woman tremble by his explicit answer and the clear-sightedness with which he looked into her heart, — a heart as rapacious as Madame Cibot's.

"In six weeks the property will be divided."

"Poor man!" she said, trying, but in vain, to look sad.

"Has madame any message to send to Monsieur Lebœuf? I shall take the train to Mantes."

"Yes. Wait a few moments, and I will write and invite him to dine with us to-morrow. I wish to see him and arrange some plan by which the injustice you have suffered may be repaired."

When Madame de Marville had left him, Fraisier, who saw himself *juge-de-paix*, was no longer the same man: he swelled out; his lungs drew in full draughts of the air of happiness and the wind of success. Dipping from the unfathomed reservoir of the will fresh and powerful doses of that divine essence, he felt himself, like Rémonencq, capable of a crime to insure success, provided no proof of it remained. He had boldly faced Madame de Marville, turning conjectures into certainties, affirming this and that as it suited him, with the sole purpose of compelling her to employ him to obtain the property for her, and thus secure her protection and influence. The representative of two lives of intense poverty, two cravings not less intense, he kicked away with disdainful foot his horrible home in the rue de la Perle. He fingered prospectively three thousand francs in fees from Madame Cibot, and five thousand more from Madame de Marville. That meant the acquisition of a suitable appartement. Moreover, he could pay off his debt to Doctor Poulain. There are certain malignant natures, bitter, and disposed to wickedness by sufferings or disease, which, nevertheless, experience feelings of an opposite nature, and to an equally intense degree. Richelieu was a good friend, though a cruel enemy. Fraisier would have let himself be hacked in pieces for Doctor Poulain, in gratitude for the suc-

cor he had received from him. Madame de Marville, returning with a letter in her hand, watched for a moment, without being seen herself, the man who was dreaming of a happy and well-provided life, and thought him less ugly than when she first glanced at him: besides, he was about to be useful to her; and we look at a tool of our own with another eye to that with which we look at a neighbor's.

"Monsieur Fraisier," she said, "you have shown me that you are a man of intelligence, and I think you capable of plain speaking."

Fraisier made an eloquent gesture.

"Well," she continued, "I summon you to answer candidly one question: Will Monsieur de Marville or myself be compromised by any of your proceedings?"

"I should not have sought you out, madame, if I expected to reproach myself some day for flinging mud upon you, were it only a speck as big as a pin's head, for on you the spot would seem as large as the moon. You forget, madame, that to become, by your means, *juge-de-paix*, I must make sure that you are satisfied. I received, early in life, too severe a lesson to risk another such thrashing. And now, madame, one last word. Every step I take which concerns you shall be submitted to you in the first instance."

"Very good. Here is my letter to Monsieur Lebœuf. I shall expect to hear the exact value of the property."

"That 's the gist of the whole matter," said Fraisier, astutely, bowing to Madame de Marville with as much grace as his native ugliness allowed him to show.

"What a godsend!" thought Madame de Marville;

"ah, I shall be rich! Camusot can be a deputy; for if we start this Fraisier in the arrondissement of Bolbec he can get us a majority. What a tool!"

"How providential!" thought Fraisier, as he descended the staircase. "What a deep and daring woman that is! I'd like a wife of that kind. And now to work!"

And he departed for Mantes, where he was pledged to obtain the good word of a man he knew but little. He counted, however, on Madame Vatinelle; for the wrongs of love are often like the protested notes of a solvent debtor, — they bear interest.

XXII.

ADVICE TO OLD BACHELORS.

THREE days later, while Schmucke slept, — for Madame Cibot and the old pianist had already divided the duty of nursing and watching the patient, — the Cibot had what she called a "set-to" with poor Pons. It may be as well to call attention to a sad peculiarity in cases of hepatitis. Invalids whose livers are more or less affected are inclined to be impatient and to get angry; such anger relieves them for the time being, and even, under the stimulus of fever, occasionally brings out unnatural strength. The excitement once over, however, the reaction — or "collapse," as the doctors call it — sets in, and the loss of vital power in the organism is evident in all its gravity. Thus in liver-diseases, more especially in those resulting from severe grief, the patient falls into a state of weakness after such excitements, which is all the more dangerous because he has been necessarily subjected to a low diet. It is, in fact, a fever which fastens upon the temperament of a man, and is neither in the blood nor in the brain. This excitability of the whole being produces melancholy, and the patient takes a dislike even to himself. In such a condition, the least thing will cause dangerous irritation. Madame Cibot, in spite of the doctor's warnings, did not believe — she, a woman of the people, without experience or education — in any

such straining of the nervous system under the exacerbations of temperament. The cautions of Doctor Poulain were to her nothing more than "doctors' talk." She was determined, like all women of the lower classes, to feed Pons her own way, and she was only prevented from secretly giving him a slice of ham, a good omelet, or vanilla chocolate, by the peremptory order of Doctor Poulain, —

"Give him a single mouthful of anything, no matter what, and it will kill him like a pistol-shot."

The obstinacy of the lower classes is so great in this respect that a chief cause of their repugnance to go to a hospital is that they believe persons are killed there by want of food. The mortality caused by women who take food privately to their husbands has been so great that physicians have now resolved to enforce a rigid personal search of the patients on the days when their relations come to see them. Madame Cibot, to bring about a momentary quarrel which was necessary to secure her immediate ends, related her visit to the theatre, not omitting an account of her "set-to" with Mademoiselle Héloïse, the ballet-dancer.

"But what did you go there for?" asked the patient for the third time, wholly unable to stop the Cibot when she was once launched on a flood of words.

"And so, when I 'd given 'em a bit o' my mind, Mademoiselle Héloïse, who saw plain enough what I was, knocked under, and we ended the best friends in the world. And yet you ask me what I went there for?" she added, repeating Pons's words.

Certain gabblers, and they are gabblers of genius, catch up the questions, objections, and observations of

others as a species of aliment for their own discourse, — as if the natural flow could ever dry up!

"Why, I went there to get your Monsieur Gaudissard out of his scrape; he wants music for his ballet, and you ain't in no condition, my treasure, to scribble it on that paper o' yours, or go and lead that orchestra. I 've managed it so as they 've engaged one Monsieur Garangeot to make the music for the 'Mohicans' — "

"Garangeot!" cried Pons in a fury, "Garangeot, a man without any talent! I would n't even have him for a first violin! He is a man of a great deal of cleverness, and he writes very good *feuilletons* about music; but I 'll defy him to compose an air! How the devil did you get the idea of going to the theatre?"

"Come, come, my precious, don't boil over like a saucepan o' milk! (The old demon, ain't he as obstinate as a mule!) Can you write music in the state you 're in? Why, you hain't never looked at yourself in the glass. You 're nothing but skin and bone; you 're as weak as a sparrow: and d' ye think you 're fit to write your kind o' figures when you can't even write mine? — That reminds me I ought to go and see after the gentleman on the third floor, who owes us seventeen francs: 't ain't to be sneezed at; for after I 've paid the apothecary there won't be nothing but twenty francs left. I had to tell it all to that man, who looks like a good fellow, that Gaudissard, — jolly name! I like it, — he 's a regular Roger Bontemps that just suits me. He won't never have liver diseases. So, as I was saying, I had to tell him how you are, — gracious! you know you ain't well, — and so he 's filled your place for the time being — "

"Filled my place!" cried Pons in a thundering voice, sitting up in bed.

As a general thing, sick men, and especially those within sweep of the scythe of Death, cling to their situations with as strong a passion as they put, early in life, into winning them. To find his place filled was to the poor dying man a preliminary death.

"But the doctor tells me that I am doing very well," he said, "and that I shall soon get back to my usual life. You have killed me, ruined me, murdered me!"

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" cried the Cibot. "There you go! I'm your executioner, am I? That's the kind o' thing you tell Monsieur Schmucke behind my back. I know very well what you say; you are an ungrateful monster!"

"But don't you know that if I am only fifteen days behind time in getting well, they'll call me, when I do go back to the theatre, an old fogey, an old man? They'll say I'm past work, that I'm Empire, an old wig, rococo!" cried the sick man, still eager to live. "Garangeot must have made himself friends in the theatre. He has lowered the pitch for some actress who has n't a voice; he has licked Monsieur Gaudissard's boots; he has got some friend of his to put puffs about them in the newspapers. In a concern like ours, Madame Cibot, they can pick a hole in any man's coat. What demon sent you there?"

"My goodness! Monsieur Schmucke talked it over with me for a week. What is it you want? You don't think o' nothing but yourself. You 're so selfish, you 'd kill people who take care o' you! There 's that poor Monsieur Schmucke, who 's been dog-tired for a month:

he 's that fagged-out he can't go nowhere, nor do nothing, nor give lessons, nor go to the theatre; and yet you won't see it! He takes care o' you nights, and I take care o' you days. If I was to sit up with you, as I did at first, thinking you would n't want nothing, I 'd have to sleep all day; and then who 'd look after the household and make both ends meet, I 'd like to know? Sickness is sickness, and that 's all there is about it!"

"It is impossible that Schmucke ever had such a thought!"

"Perhaps you 'll say next that I trumped it up! Do you think we are made of iron? If Monsieur Schmucke had to go on with his work, and give six or eight lessons a day, and spend the evenings from half-past six to half-past eleven in the orchestra of your theatre, he 'd be dead in a week. Do you want to be the death o' that worthy man, who 'd shed his blood for you? By the mother that bore me, no one never saw such a patient as you are. What have you done with your common sense? has it gone to the pawnbrokers? We are all at our last gasp here for you, we do our very best; and you ain't satisfied. D 'ye want to drive us into a madhouse? As for me, I 'm done for."

The Cibot might talk as she pleased, anger kept Pons from saying a word; he writhed in his bed, articulating faint interjections, and seemed almost dead. As usual, when the quarrel reached this point, it turned suddenly to caresses. The nurse darted at the sick man, took his head, laid it on the pillow, forced him to lie quiet, and covered him over with the bedclothes.

"Don't put yourself in such a way!" she cried. "My poor cat, it 's all because you 're ill! Doctor

Poulain says so. Come, be quiet, my little man. You 're the idol of everybody who comes near you: don't the doctor himself come to see you twice a day? What 'll he say if he finds you in such a pother? You put me 'most beside myself, you do; it ain't right. When you 've got Mam' Cibot for a nurse, you ought to behave yourself. Here you are talking and screaming! and that 's forbidden; you know it is. Talking irritates you. Now, what are you getting angry for? It 's you who are to blame; you are always nagging at me! Come now, be reasonable; if Monsieur Schmucke and I, whose bowels yearn over you, do what we think best, you ought to be satisfied. It 's all right, my cherub!"

"Schmucke never told you to go to the theatre without consulting me."

"Must I wake him up, the poor dear man, who 's sleeping like a top, and make him testify?"

"No, no!" cried Pons. "If my dear, tender Schmucke resolved to do it, I must be worse than I think I am," he added, casting a distressed and melancholy glance upon the objects of art which decorated his chamber. "Must I bid farewell to my dear pictures, and to all these things that I had made my friends, and to my own divine Schmucke? Oh! can it be?"

Madame Cibot, cold-blooded actress that she was, put a handkerchief to her eyes. This mute reply drove the sick man into a gloomy revery. Crushed by these vital blows on parts so sensitive, — his social life and his physical health, the loss of his situation and the prospect of death, — he collapsed suddenly, and no longer had the strength to be angry. He lay there, dejected and gloomy, like a consumptive at the point of death.

"Now, don't you see," continued Madame Cibot, perceiving that her victim was completely broken down, "don't you see that for Monsieur Schmucke's sake you ought to send for the notary of the quarter, Monsieur Trognon, a very worthy man?"

"You are always talking to me about that Trognon," said the sick man.

"Oh! I don't care, him or another, — for all you 'll leave to me!"

She shook her head, as if to mark her contempt for riches. Silence reigned.

Just at this moment Schmucke, who had slept for six hours, was roused by hunger, got up, and came into Pons's room. He stood looking at him for several minutes without uttering a word, for Madame Cibot had put a finger on her lips as he came in. Then she rose, went close to the German, and whispered in his ear:

"Thank God, he 's going to sleep! He 's as vicious as a red ass! He fights his illness."

"On the contrary, I am very patient," said the poor victim in a piteous tone which revealed his extreme weakness. "But, my dear Schmucke, she has been to the theatre and had my place filled."

He paused, unable to say more. The Cibot profited by the interval to make a sign to Schmucke, signifying that Pons was out of his mind, and to whisper, —

"Don't contradict him; if you do, you 'll kill him."

"And she declares you sent her," continued Pons, looking at the honest German.

"Yes, I tid," said Schmucke heroically; "it vas nayceszary. Toan 'd spick. Led us zave your laife. Id ees nonzenze to vork hart venn you haf a drayzure.

Gate vell; ve vill zell zome prig-à-prag, and ent our tays in beace, mit our goot Matame Zipod."

"She is deluding you!" answered Pons, sadly.

Not seeing Madame Cibot, who had stepped behind the bed to make signs to Schmucke which the patient should not see, he thought she had left the room, and added quickly, —

"She is murdering me!"

"What do you mean? I, murdering you!" she cried, coming forward with flaming eyes, her hands on her hips. "This is what one gets for the devotion of a spaniel. Good God!" She burst into tears and fell upon a chair. This tragic action caused a fatal revulsion of feeling in poor Pons.

"Well," she said, rising and looking at the two friends with the eye of a malignant woman, which can deliver a pistol-shot and a poisoned stab in each glance, "I 'm sick o' doing nothing but just wearing myself out body and soul. You must get a nurse."

The two friends looked at each other in terror.

"It 's all very well to make faces at yourselves like a couple o' actors! I 've made up my mind. I 'm going now to Doctor Poulain to tell him he must find you a nurse, and we 'll square up our accounts. You 'll return me all the money I 've spent upon you, and which I never meant to ask for. It 's only the other day I went and borrowed five hundred francs more from Monsieur Pillerault."

"It ees pegauze he ees zo zig!" cried Schmucke, precipitating himself upon Madame Cibot and seizing her round the waist. "Blease haf baychenze!"

"You, you 're an angel; I 'd kiss your footprints, I

would," she said. "But Monsieur Pons never liked me; he always hated me. Besides, he may think I want him to put me in his will."

"Hush! you vill gill him!" cried Schmucke.

"Adieu, monsieur," she said to Pons, with a blasting look, "you may live long for all the harm I wish you. When you are more friendly to me, and when you choose to think what I do is well done, I'll come back to you. Till then, I shall stay at home. I was a mother to you; and who ever heard o' children turning against their own mothers? No, no, Monsieur Schmucke; I won't hear nothing you say. I'll bring you your dinner, I'll wait upon you; but you must get a nurse for Monsieur Pons: tell Doctor Poulain to send you one."

And she went off, slamming the doors with such violence that the precious, fragile things about the appartement tottered. The sick man heard the clicking of his porcelains, and in his tortured state it was like the last stroke when a victim is broken upon the wheel.

An hour later Madame Cibot, instead of entering Pons's bedroom, called to Schmucke through the door and told him he would find his dinner ready in the dining-room. The poor German went there with a wan face covered with tears.

"Mein boor Bons ra-afes," he said; "he zay dat you are vicket. It ees pegauze he ees zo eel," he added, to soften Madame Cibot, without blaming Pons.

"Oh, I've had enough of him and his illness! He ain't neither my father, nor my husband, nor my brother, nor yet my child. He's took a dislike to me; well, that's an end of it! *You* I'm willing to follow to the

ends o' the earth. But when it comes to giving one's heart and one's life and all one's savings, and neglecting one's husband, — for there 's Cibot ill now, — and then to be called a wicked woman, it 's too much; it 's taking the coffee too strong; it is —"

"Goffy?"

"Yes, coffee. I don't use no idle words, I mean what I say. You owe me for three months, at a hundred and ninety francs: that makes five hundred and seventy; then there 's the rent, which I 've paid twice for you, and here 's the receipt, — six hundred, taking off the sou per franc and your taxes: twelve hundred in all, less a trifle; and, lastly, the two thousand francs I lent you — without interest, remember. The total comes to three thousand one hundred and ninety-two francs. Don't you see that you must have at least two thousand francs in hand to pay the nurse and the doctor and the apothecary, and to feed the nurse? That 's why I 've borrowed a thousand francs from Monsieur Pillerault," she added, showing the two five hundred-franc notes she had just received from Gaudissard.

Schmucke listened to this running account with a quite conceivable stupefaction; for he was as much a financier as a cat is a musician.

"Matame Zipod, Bons ees oud ov hees het. Parton heem. Dake gare ov heem. Gondinue to pe our Brofitence; I ask id on my knees."

And the German knelt down before the Cibot and kissed the hands of the executioner.

"Well, listen, my good soul," she said, raising him and kissing him on the forehead. "There 's Cibot ill; he 's in bed, and I 've just sent for Doctor Poulain.

Under these circumstances I must get my money matters into shape. Besides, Cibot, when he saw me coming down in tears, put himself into such a fury that he forbade my setting foot up here again. It is he that insists on getting his money back, for 't is his, you know; we women can't do nothing against men there. But if we give him back his money, — three thousand two hundred francs, — perhaps he 'll calm down. It 's all he 's got, the poor man; it 's his whole savings for twenty-six years, — the sweat of his brow, as you may say. He wants his money to-morrow, and there ain't no squirming out of it. You don't know Cibot; when he 's angry he 'd kill a man. I might possibly get him to let me go on taking care o' both of you, if the money 's paid. You be easy; I sha'n't mind what he takes it into his head to say to me; I 'll bear it all for your sake, for you 're an angel, you are — "

"No, no; I am only a boor mann who lofs his frent, who vould lay town his laife to zave heems."

"But how about the money? My good Monsieur Schmucke, here 's an idea! I suppose you have n't nothing to give me, and yet we must have three thousand francs for your wants. Do you know what I would do in your place? I should n't make no bones about it; I should just sell six or eight o' those rubbishing pictures, and replace 'em with some you 've got in your bedroom, stuck with their face against the wall because there ain't no room to put 'em nowhere. One picture is as good as another, so what would it matter?"

"Pud vy moost you blace any oder bigchurs dare?"

"Because he 's so irritable. Yes, I know it 's his illness, for when he 's well he 's a lamb; but he 's

capable o' getting up and ferreting round, and if he gets into the salon — though, to be sure, he has n't hardly strength to cross the threshold — he 'll see the right number, and he won't miss none."

"Dat 's drue."

"We 'll tell him about the sale when he gets well again. If you do confess it to him, you can throw the blame on me, you can say you had to pay me; my shoulders can stand it!"

"I haf no raight to tisbose of dings dat do nod pelong to me," said the German, simply.

"Well, then, I shall have to summon you both before the court."

"Dat vould gill heems!"

"Then choose between the two. My gracious! sell the pictures, and tell him afterwards; you can show him the summons."

"Vell, denn! zo pe id! Zummon uz. Dat vill pe my egscuze; I vill led heem zee de baber."

The same day, at seven in the evening, Madame Cibot, who had consulted a sheriff, went to fetch Schmucke. The German found himself in presence of Monsieur Tabareau, who called upon him to make payment; and on his response, — which Schmucke made trembling from head to foot, — he was summoned, together with Pons, before the court to receive judgment. The aspect of this official, and the stamped paper with its legal verbiage, produced such an effect upon the mind of Schmucke that he resisted no longer.

"Zell de bigchurs," he said, with tears in his eyes.

The next day, at six o'clock in the morning, Élie Magus and Rémonencq unhooked the pictures each had

selected from the walls. Two receipts for two thousand five hundred francs were made out in due form and signed by Schmucke; the one for Élie Magus ran as follows: —

"I, the undersigned, on behalf of Monsieur Pons, acknowledge the receipt of two thousand five hundred francs from Monsieur Élie Magus for four pictures which I have sold to him; the said sum to be employed for the personal needs of Monsieur Pons. One of these pictures, attributed to Dürer, is the portrait of a woman; the second, of the Italian school, is also a portrait; the third is a Dutch landscape by Breughel; the fourth, a Florentine picture representing the Holy Family, by an unknown master."

The receipt given to Rémonencq was in the same terms, and designated a Greuze, a Claude Lorraine, a Rubens, and a Van Dyck under the general name of French and Dutch schools.

"Zo mooch money meks me dink dat dose pauples are really faluaple," said Schmucke, receiving the five thousand francs.

"They are worth something," said Rémonencq; "I'd give a hundred thousand francs for the whole lot."

The Auvergnat, on being asked to render the little service, substituted in the empty frames of these masterpieces eight other pictures of the same dimensions, chosen from among the inferior paintings which Pons had hung in Schmucke's room. As soon as Élie Magus got possession of his four treasures he called the Cibot downstairs, under pretence of settling their accounts. But as soon as he got her there, he complained of his poverty,

found defects in the canvas, declared the pictures must be rebacked, offered the Cibot thirty thousand francs instead of forty, and got her to take them by showing the dazzling bits of paper on which the Bank of France engraves the words, "a thousand francs." Magus compelled Rémonencq to give the Cibot a like sum by lending it to him on the four pictures which the Auvergnat deposited with him. In truth these pictures seemed to Magus so magnificent that he could not make up his mind to let them go; and the following morning he brought six thousand francs premium to the iron-dealer, who made over the pictures and gave Élie Magus a bill of sale for them. Madame Cibot, thus enriched to the amount of sixty-eight thousand francs, again demanded the utmost secrecy from her accomplices; and she begged the Jew to tell her how to invest the money so that no one should know that she possessed it.

"Buy shares in the Orleans railway," he replied. "They are at thirty francs below par; you will double your investment in three years, and you will get certificates which you can hide anywhere."

"Please wait here, Monsieur Magus; I'm going to the business agent of Monsieur Pons's family. He wants to know at what price you would buy the whole heap o' them things upstairs. I'll go and fetch him."

"If she were only a widow," said Rémonencq to Magus, "she'd be just what I want; for here she is, rich —"

"Especially if she puts her money in the Orleans railway; in two years she will double it. I have put my poor little savings there," added the Jew; "they

are to be my daughter's *dot*. Let us go and take a turn on the boulevard while we are waiting for the lawyer."

"If God would only take Cibot to himself, — and he 's sick already, —" thought Rémonencq, "I should have a fine wife to keep shop, and I 'd start in business on a grand scale —"

XXIII.

IN WHICH SCHMUCKE RISES TO THE THRONE OF GOD.

"Good-day, my dear Monsieur Fraisier," said the Cibot in a wheedling tone, entering the office of her counsel. "What's all this your concierge tells me? Are you going to move away from here?"

"Yes, my dear Madame Cibot, I have taken an appartement on the first floor of the house where Doctor Poulain lives, just above his, and I am going to borrow two or three thousand francs and furnish it suitably; for the appartement is really a very pretty one; the owner has just done it up. I am employed, as I told you, in the interests of Monsieur le président de Marville, as well as in yours. I give up the business of a mere agent, and I shall put my name down on the list of barristers; and therefore I must live in a good house. The Parisian barristers won't let any man into their ranks unless he has respectable belongings, a library, etc. I am a doctor of laws, I have passed through my licentiate and been called to the bar, and already I have powerful protectors. — Well, how is our affair going on?"

"Perhaps you 'll accept my little hoard which is in the savings' bank," said the Cibot; "'t ain't much, — three

thousand francs, the fruit o' twenty-five years' pinching and privation. You can give me a bill of exchange, as Rémonencq says. I 'm so ignorant that I don't know nothing but what others tell me."

"No; the statutes forbid a lawyer to draw bills. I'll give you a receipt bearing interest at five per cent, and you can return it to me if I get you into the will of old Pons for an annuity of twelve hundred francs."

The Cibot, caught in a net, kept silence.

"Silence gives consent," said Fraisier; "bring me the money to-morrow."

"Well, I'll willingly pay you your commission in advance," said Madame Cibot; "that 'll be making sure o' my annuity."

"How do matters stand now?" resumed Fraisier, giving an affirmative nod with his head. "I saw Poulain last night. It seems you are harassing your patient finely; another such bout as that you had yesterday, and stones will form in the bladder. Be gentle with him. Don't you see, my dear Madame Cibot? You must n't lay up remorse for yourself, or you won't make old bones."

"Let me alone with your remorse! Don't you never speak to me o' the guillotine again! Monsieur Pons is just as obstinate as a mule! You don't know him; it is he that makes me mad. There ain't a worse man nor he: his relations are quite right, he 's artful, vindictive, and pig-headed. — Monsieur Magus is at the house, as I told you; he 's waiting for you."

"Very good; I'll be there as soon as you. Your annuity depends on the value of this collection; if it

comes to eight hundred thousand francs, you will have fifteen hundred a year: that 's a fortune!"

"Well, I'll tell 'em to value the things conscientiously."

An hour later, while Pons was sleeping heavily, after taking from Schmucke's hand an anodyne ordered by the doctor, of which Madame Cibot, unknown to the German, had doubled the dose, Fraisier, Rémonencq, and Magus, three devils incarnate, were examining piece by piece the seventeen hundred specimens contained in the old man's collection. Schmucke was in bed, and the three vultures scenting the carcase were masters of the situation.

"Don't make no noise," said the Cibot every time Magus went into an ecstasy, or explained to Rémonencq the value of some fine work.

It was a sight to rend the heart, — four shapes of the lust of greed, weighing in the palms of their hands the property of the sleeping man whose death was the object of their eager desire! The valuation of the treasures in the salon took three hours.

"On an average," said the dirty Jew, "each thing here is worth a thousand francs."

"That would be seventeen hundred thousand francs!" exclaimed Fraisier, thunderstruck.

"Not to me," replied Magus, whose eye sank back into its cold tints; "I will not give more than eight hundred thousand francs. No one knows how long such property may stay on his hands. There are masterpieces that can't find a sale in ten years, and the original cost is doubled at compound interest; but I am willing to pay cash."

"In the bedroom there are miniatures, enamels, gold and silver snuff-boxes, and glassware," remarked Rémonencq.

"Can we examine them?" asked Fraisier.

"I'll go and see if he's sound asleep," answered the Cibot.

At a sign from the woman the birds of prey entered.

"There were the masterpieces," said Magus, every hair of whose white beard quivered, making a sign over his shoulder at the salon, "but here are the riches! And what riches! Kings have nothing finer in their museums."

Rémonencq's eyes, kindling at the snuff-boxes, glowed like carbuncles. Fraisier, cold and quiet as a snake coiling for its spring, stretched out his flat head and stood in the attitude which painters give to Mephistopheles. The three embodied greeds, thirsting for gold as devils thirst for the dews of Paradise, cast each a glance at the possessor of all this wealth, who made a movement in his sleep as if from nightmare. Suddenly, under the glitter of those diabolic eyes, the sick man opened his own and uttered a piercing cry, —

"Thieves! robbers! Help! they will murder me!"

Evidently he continued to dream, though wide awake; he sprang up in his bed; his eyes were staring, white, and fixed, and unable to turn. Élie Magus and Rémonencq ran to the door, but there they were rooted to the ground by these words, —

"Magus here! I am betrayed!"

The sick man was awake now, roused by the instinct of preservation of his treasures, — a feeling fully equal to that of personal preservation.

"Madame Cibot, who is that man?" he said, shuddering at the sight of Fraisier, who stood motionless.

"My gracious! how could I turn him out?" she said, winking a sign to Fraisier. "Monsieur has just come with a message from your relations —"

"Yes, monsieur, I am here on behalf of Madame de Marville, her husband and her daughter, to express their regret at your illness; they heard of it accidentally, and are anxious to nurse you themselves. They propose that you should go to their country-seat at Marville to recover your health. Madame la vicomtesse Popinot, the little Cécile whom you love so well, will be your nurse. She has taken your side against her mother, and has made her see she was mistaken."

"And they have sent you here, my heirs! have they?" cried Pons indignantly, "with the cleverest connoisseur and the keenest expert in all Paris for a guide! Ha! the errand is a good one," he went on, laughing like a madman. "You have come to value my pictures, my curiosities, my snuff-boxes, my miniatures! Value, indeed! why you've got a man with you who not only knows everything there is to be known about them, but one who could buy them all twice over, for he is ten times a millionnaire. My dear relations won't have to wait long for their inheritance," he added, with bitter irony, "they've dealt me my death-blow — Ah! Madame Cibot, you called yourself my mother, and you've brought these people, my rival and the Camusots, here while I slept. Out, all of you!"

And the unhappy man, beside himself through the double effect of fear and anger, leaped out of bed like a spectre.

"Take my arm, monsieur," said the Cibot, to keep him from falling. "Be calm; the gentlemen have gone."

"I wish to see the salon!" cried the dying man.

Madame Cibot signed to the crows to fly away; then she seized Pons, lifted him like a feather, and put him back in his bed, in spite of his cries. Seeing that the wretched man was utterly exhausted, she went to close the outer door of the appartement. The three assassins were still upon the landing; and when the Cibot saw them she told them to wait, for she overheard Fraisier saying to Magus, —

"Write me a letter, signed by both of you, in which you pledge yourselves to pay nine hundred thousand francs cash for the collection of Monsieur Pons, and I'll make sure that you get a large premium on it."

Then he whispered in Madame Cibot's ear a word — a single word — which no one heard, and went downstairs with the two others to the porter's lodge.

"Madame Cibot," said the unhappy Pons when the woman returned to him, "are they gone?"

"Gone! who?" she demanded.

"Those men."

"What men? Come, what men do you suppose you've seen?" she said. "You've had a raging fever; if it hadn't been for me you'd have jumped out o' the window, — and you talk to me about men! — How long are you going to behave like this?"

"Do you mean to say that there was not a man standing there just now who said he was sent by my family? —"

"Are you going to stand me out about it?" she cried. "My gracious! do you know where you ought to be? In a lunatic asylum. Talk about seeing men, indeed!"

"Élie Magus, Rémonencq —"

"Oh! as for Rémonencq, yes, you may have seen him; for he came up just now to tell me my poor Cibot is very ill. I'm going to leave you and see after him. My Cibot first of all, I say. When my man is ill I don't think o' nobody else. Now, you try to keep quiet and go to sleep for two hours. I've sent for Doctor Poulain, and I'll bring him up when he gets here. Take your drink, and be good."

"Was there no one in my room, standing there, just now, when I woke up?"

"No one," she said; "you must have seen Monsieur Rémonencq in the mirror."

"You are right, Madame Cibot," said the sick man, suddenly becoming as docile as a lamb.

"Well, there, now you are reasonable! Adieu, my cherub; keep yourself quiet, and I'll soon be back."

When Pons heard the door of the appartement close, he collected all his remaining strength to get out of bed; for he said to himself, —

"They are deceiving me, they are plundering me! Schmucke is a mere child; he would let them tie him in a sack!"

And the poor man, roused by the desire to clear up his suspicions in regard to the frightful scene which had just occurred, and which seemed to him too real to be a delusion, had strength enough to reach the door of his bed-room. He opened it with difficulty and entered

the salon, where the sight of all his dear pictures, his statues, his Florentine bronzes, his porcelains, his treasures, revived his heart. The old collector, in his dressing-gown, with bare legs and his brain on fire, was able to walk round the lanes formed by the sideboards and tables which divided the room longitudinally into two parts. At a glance he counted everything, and saw that the museum was intact. He was about to return to his bed when his eyes were attracted by a picture of Greuze put in the place of the Knight of Malta by Sebastian del Piombo. Suspicion tore its way through his mind as lightning rends the stormy heavens. He looked at the places of his eight masterpieces and saw they were each replaced by other pictures. A black veil was suddenly drawn over his eyes, he fainted, and fell upon the floor. The swoon was so complete that he lay there two hours, and was found by Schmucke when the German, having wakened, came out of his own room to go to his friend's. Schmucke had much difficulty in raising the dying man and putting him back to bed; but when he questioned the quasi-corpse and obtained only a glazed look and muttered words, the poor German, instead of losing his head, became a hero of friendship. Under the pressure of despair, this child-man had inspirations such as come to loving women and to mothers. He heated towels (he actually found towels!) and wrapped them round his friend's hands and put them to the pit of his stomach; then he took the cold, damp brow between his own hands and called back the vital spark with a potency of will worthy of Apollonius of Tyana. He kissed his friend upon the eyelids like those Marys

beside the Dead Christ whom the Italian sculptors call La Pietà and carve upon their bas-reliefs. These divine efforts, this transfusion of one life into another, this act of motherhood, this work of love, was crowned with success. At the end of half an hour Pons was warmed to life, and seemed once more a human form; natural color came back to his eyes, and surface-warmth restored the action of the internal organs. Schmucke made Pons drink an infusion of balm mixed with wine, which revived the vital spark in the failing body; intelligence shone once more upon the brow lately as senseless as a stone. Pons understood the sacred devotion, the potent affection, to which his resuscitation was due.

"Without thee I should have died!" he said, feeling his face softly bathed in the tears of his friend, who laughed and wept by turns.

Hearing these words, and racked by the delirium of hope, which equals that of despair, poor Schmucke, whose strength was exhausted, collapsed like a torn balloon. It was his turn to give way, and he let himself fall into an arm-chair, clasping his hands and thanking God in fervent prayer. A miracle had been wrought for him! He took no thought of the virtue of his own prayer of action; he believed only in the power of the God whom he invoked. Nevertheless, the seeming miracle was an effect of natural causes which has often been verified by physicians. A patient surrounded by affection, cared for by persons anxious to save his life, will be saved, if his chances for life are equal, when another man in charge of hired nurses will succumb. Doctors refuse to see in this the effect of involuntary

magnetism; they attribute the result to intelligent care, to an exact observance of their orders. But many mothers know the virtue of these passionate projections of a steady desire.

"My good Schmucke! —"

"Toan'd spick; mein heart unterzdants: rezd,—rezd and zleeb."

"Poor friend! noble creature! child of God, living in God's presence! the only being who ever loved me!" said Pons by interjections, discovering hitherto unknown modulations in his voice.

The soul about to take its flight breathed through these words, which gave to Schmucke ecstasies well-nigh equal to those of love.

"Yez, yez! Und I vill pegome a lion; I vill vork; I vill deach for dwo."

"Listen, my good and faithful and precious friend! Let me speak: the time is short; I am dying; I cannot recover from these repeated shocks."

Schmucke wept like a child.

"Listen now: you shall weep later," said Pons. "Christian, you must submit. I have been robbed — by Madame Cibot! Before I leave you I must tell you certain things; for you know nothing of life. They have taken eight pictures, which are worth a large sum of money —"

"Forgif me! I haf zold dem!"

"You!"

"I —" said the poor German. "You und I vare zummoned be-for de goord."

"Summoned! By whom?"

"Vait a minute,"

Schmucke went to fetch the stamped paper left by the sheriff's officer, and brought it back.

Pons read it attentively; then he let the paper fall, and kept silence. This student of human labor, who up to the present time had ignored the moral aspects of life, suddenly perceived each thread of the net woven by the Cibot. His intuition as an artist, his intelligence as a pupil of the Academy of Rome, all his youth, flashed back upon him for a few moments.

"My good Schmucke, obey me as soldiers obey their captain. Listen. Go down to the porter's lodge and tell that horrible woman that I wish to see the person who was sent here by my cousin the president, and that if he does not come, I intend to bequeath my collection to the Musée; and I shall proceed to make my will."

Schmucke did the errand. But at the first word Madame Cibot began to smile.

"Our dear patient has had a raging fever, my good Monsieur Schmucke," she said. "He fancied he saw people in his room. I give you my word, as an honest woman, there was n't no one come from the family o' the dear man."

Schmucke returned with that answer, which he repeated verbatim.

"She is more daring, more astute, more cunning, more Machiavelian, than I thought for," said Pons, smiling. "She lies, even in her lodge! Now, listen to me. She brought here this morning a Jew named Élie Magus, Rémonencq, and a third man whose name I don't know. She counted on my being asleep to let them appraise the value of my collection. I woke by

accident, and I saw them weighing my snuff-boxes in their very hands! Then the unknown man said that he was sent here by the Camusots. I talked with him; but that infamous Cibot maintained to me that I was dreaming! My good Schmucke, I was not dreaming: I heard the man plainly; he spoke to me. The two others were frightened, and ran to the door. I felt sure the Cibot would deny it to you. Her scheme shall fail. I will set a trap of my own, in which the infamous creature shall be caught. My poor friend, you think Madame Cibot an angel. She is a wretch who for a month past has been slowly killing me for her own covetous ends! I could not believe such wickedness existed in a woman who has served us faithfully for many years. My confidence has destroyed me. How much did they pay you for those eight pictures?"

"Faife dousant vrancs."

"Good God! they were worth twenty times as much!" cried Pons; "they were the flower of my collection. I have no time now to bring a suit to recover them; besides, it would only be exposing you as the dupe of these scoundrels. A lawsuit would be the death of you! You don't know what the law is: it is the sewer of all moral infamies! At the mere sight of such villanies souls like yours would expire. And, besides, you will be rich enough. Those pictures cost me four thousand francs. I have had them thirty-six years. We have been robbed with astonishing cleverness. I am on the verge of the grave. I care for you; I think of you alone, — you, the best of human beings. I will not have you stripped of everything, for all that I possess is yours. Therefore, you must learn to

distrust others, you who have never known what distrust means! God protects you, I know it; but he may forget you for a moment, and then you will be pillaged, like a merchant-vessel by buccaneers. The Cibot is a monster; she is killing me: and you believe she is an angel! I wish to show you what she is. Go and tell her to send me a notary, for I intend to make my will. I will show you that woman in the act of robbing us!"

Schmucke listened to Pons as if he were reciting the Apocalypse. If there really existed so vile a nature, if Pons were right, then it was for him the negation of Providence.

"Mein boor frent Bons ees eel," he said, again descending to the lodge, and addressing Madame Cibot. "He vants to mek his vill: go and gate a nodary."

This was said in presence of several persons; for by this time Cibot was dangerously ill. Rémonencq, his sister, two concierges from neighboring houses, three servants belonging to the other tenants, and the tenant of the first floor looking toward the street, were all standing in the porte-cochère.

"You may just go and find your notary yourself," cried the Cibot, her eyes full of tears, "and have your will made by whom you please. It's not likely that when my poor Cibot is dying I should leave his bedside. I'd give all the Ponses in the world to save my Cibot, — a man who hain't never given me so much as two ounces o' grief in the thirty years I've lived with him."

And she went into the inner room, leaving Schmucke bewildered.

"Monsieur," said the tenant of the first floor, "is Monsieur Pons very ill?"

This tenant, named Jolivard, was employed in the record-office at the Palais-de-Justice.

"He nearly tied an hour aco," answered Schmucke, mournfully.

"Close by here, in the rue Saint-Louis, there 's a Monsieur Trognon, a notary," observed Jolivard; "he is the notary for this quarter."

"Should you like me to go and fetch him?" said Rémonencq to Schmucke.

"Eef you bleaze," answered Schmucke; "for eef Matame Zipod gan not nurse my boor frent, I moost not leaf him in der zdade he ees in."

"Madame Cibot told us he was crazy," observed Jolivard.

"Grazy!" cried Schmucke, terror-stricken, "grazy! he nefer hat his mindt zo goot, — and dat ees joost vat mek me zo uneazy."

All the persons grouped about the speakers listened to the conversation with a very natural curiosity which helped to imprint it on their memories. Schmucke, who did not know Fraisier, had not observed that satanic head with its brilliant eyes. The lawyer, by two words in the Cibot's ear, had prompted this bold scene, which would otherwise have been beyond the woman's own powers, but which she now played with astonishing ability. To have it thought that the patient was out of his mind was a corner-stone of the edifice the man of law was engaged in erecting. The incident of the morning had played into Fraisier's hand; but if he had not been present at this moment it is possible that Madame

Cibot, in her trouble, might have lost her head when the innocent Schmucke spread Pons's net and requested her to recall the emissary of the Camusot family. Rémonencq, who at this moment saw Doctor Poulain approaching, asked nothing better than to get away. The reasons for his haste are as follows.

XXIV.

THE CRAFT OF A TESTATOR.

For the last ten days, Rémonencq had played the part of Providence, — a course singularly displeasing to Justice, who boasts of being the sole representative of deity. Rémonencq was resolved to get rid, at any cost, of the one obstacle that stood in the way of his happiness. To him, happiness consisted in marrying the captivating concierge and tripling his capital. So, observing the little tailor as he drank his herb-tea, the thought came into the Auvergnat's head to convert a passing indisposition into a fatal illness; and his business of iron-working put the means in his way.

One morning, as he smoked his pipe, leaning, as usual, against the post of his shop-door, dreaming of the fine shop on the boulevard de la Madeleine where Madame Cibot, gorgeously dressed, should rule the roast, his eyes fell on a brass disk covered with verdigris. The idea of cleaning his disk into Cibot's tisane darted through his mind. He fastened the disk, which was about the size of a five-franc piece, to his dress by a bit of twine; and every day while Madame Cibot was busy with "her gentlemen," Rémonencq went to inquire for the health of his friend the tailor. During this visit, which lasted some time, he put the disk to soak in the tea, and when he went away he pulled it out by the bit

of string. This slight addition of the oxide of copper, commonly called verdigris, introduced a deleterious element into the beneficial tisane, though in infinitesimal proportions, which made insidious inroads into the system. The following are the exact results of this criminal homœopathic treatment. On the third day poor Cibot's hair began to fall off, his teeth loosened in their sockets, and the whole mechanism of the system was affected by the imperceptible dose of poison. Doctor Poulain puzzled his brains over the effects of the decoction, for he knew enough to recognize the presence of some destructive agent. Unknown to every one, he carried off the tisane and analyzed it himself; but found nothing. It so chanced that on that day Rémonencq, frightened at his own work, had omitted to use the fatal disk. Doctor Poulain squared the matter with his own mind and the demands of science by supposing that the blood of the little tailor, who sat cross-legged on a table before the window of his damp den, had become vitiated and decomposed, partly from want of exercise, but above all from perpetually breathing the fetid exhalations of the street gutter. The rue de Normandie is one of the old streets with a cleft roadway, or open gutter, which the city of Paris has not yet supplied with water-sluices, and where the black stream of household slops filters among the stones and makes the sort of mud which is peculiar to the streets of Paris.

Madame Cibot herself went and came, and led an active life, while her husband, an indefatigable workman, was always sitting like a fakir in front of his one window. His knees had become ossified, the blood had settled on his chest, his legs, shrunken and distorted,

had dwindled away until they were nearly useless. Moreover, the copper-colored skin of the little man seemed to show that he had been sickly for a long time. The good health of the wife and the bad health of the husband appeared natural results to the doctor under the circumstances.

"What is really the matter with my poor Cibot?" the woman asked of Doctor Poulain.

"My dear Madame Cibot," the doctor answered, "he is dying of the disease of door-keepers. His general debility shows an incurable vitiation of the blood."

A crime without any object, for no gain, and to serve no apparent interests ended by lulling Doctor Poulain's suspicions. Who could want to kill Cibot? His wife? The doctor saw her tasting his tisane as she sweetened it. A large number of crimes escape the vengeance of society; and they are commonly those which are committed, as in this instance, without startling signs of violence — such as bloodstains, strangulation, or bruises — or clumsy blunders, more especially when they result in no apparent profit, and are committed among the lower classes. Crime is usually betrayed by its antecedents, — by rancor, or some obvious cupidity, known to the persons who surround the scene of it. But in the case of the little tailor, Rémonencq, and Madame Cibot, no one had the least reason or interest to suspect a crime, except the doctor. The sickly, copper-colored tailor, adored by his wife, had no fortune and no enemies. The motives and the passion of Rémonencq were as safely hidden from sight as the ill-gotten gains of Madame Cibot. The doctor knew the woman and all her feelings, through and through; he believed her capable

of tormenting Pons: but he knew her to be without the desire or the will to commit a crime; moreover, he saw her taking a spoonful of Cibot's food whenever she gave it in his presence. Poulain, the only person able to come at the truth, believed there must be some accidental cause, some one of those surprising exceptions to known laws which render the practice of medicine so uncertain; and in truth the little tailor, as a consequence of his stunted existence, was unfortunately so far reduced in health that the addition of these infinitesimal doses of verdigris was sufficient to cause his death. The neighbors and the gossiping old cronies took a tone which completely screened Rémonencq and gave sufficient reason for this sudden death.

"Ah!" said one, "I've said for a long time that Monsieur Cibot was n't well."

"He worked too hard, that man," said another; "he has dried up his blood."

"He would n't listen to me," cried a neighbor. "I proposed to him to go out for a walk Sundays, and to take a day off sometimes. Two days a week ain't too much for recreation."

In short, the gossip of the neighborhood, usually so accusative, and to which justice listens through the ears of the commissary of the police, that sovereign ruler of the lower classes, explained quite naturally the death of the little tailor. Nevertheless, the thoughtful air and the anxious eyes of Doctor Poulain made Rémonencq very uneasy; so, seeing him approach, he proposed to Schmucke with much eagerness to go in search of this Monsieur Trognon, who was known to Fraisier.

"I 'll be back by the time the will is made," whispered

Fraisier to the Cibot. "In spite of your grief, you must look after the main chance, you know."

And the little barrister disappeared like a shadow to meet his friend the doctor.

"Eh! Poulain," he cried, "it's all right; we are set up for life! I'll tell you about it to-night. Decide what place will suit you best, and you shall have it! As for me, I'm to be *juge-de-paix!* Tabareau won't refuse me his daughter now. I take upon myself to get you married to Mademoiselle Vitel, the granddaughter of the present justice."

Fraisier left Poulain naturally bewildered by these words, and hopped upon the boulevard like a ball, where he signed to a passing omnibus, and in ten minutes was deposited by that modern stage-coach at the head of the rue de Choiseul. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon; Fraisier was sure of finding Madame de Marville alone, for the judges never left the Palais until five.

Madame de Marville received Fraisier with marks of distinction which showed that, according to a promise made to Madame Vatinelle, Monsieur Lebœuf had spoken favorably of the former barrister of Mantes. Amélie was almost as caressing to him as Madame de Montpensier must have been with Jacques Clément; the little lawyer was her knife. But when Fraisier presented her with the letter signed by Élie and Rémonencq in which they pledged themselves to take the whole of Pons's collection for nine hundred thousand francs in cash, Madame de Marville gave him a glance in which all the gold of that sum glittered. It was a tide of the lust of greed flowing from her eyes to those of the barrister.

"Monsieur de Marville," she began, "has charged me to invite you to dine with us to-morrow; it will be a family party. You will meet Monsieur Godeschal, the successor of Maître Desroches, my attorney; also Berthier, our notary, and my daughter and son-in-law. After dinner, you and I and the attorney and notary will have the little conference you asked for, and I will then give you full powers to act. The two gentlemen will obey your directions as you request, and they will see that all is done properly. You shall a power of attorney from Monsieur de Marville whenever necessary —"

"I must have it by the day of the death."

"It shall be ready."

"Madame, if I ask for a power of attorney, and if I desire that your own lawyer shall not appear in the case, it is far less for my interests than for yours. When I devote myself to my clients my devotion is unreserved; therefore, madame, I ask in return the same fidelity, the same confidence, from my protectors — I dare not, in your case, say clients. You may perhaps think that in acting thus I wish to fasten myself upon this affair. No, no, madame; but if anything reprehensible were to happen, — for in a matter of inheritance people are sometimes carried away, more especially when it is a question of nine hundred thousand francs, — you could not throw the blame on a man like Maître Godeschal, who is known to be integrity itself, but you could put what you like on the shoulders of a miserable little agent like me."

Madame de Marville looked at Fraisier with admiration.

"You will certainly go very high or very low," she said. "If I were you, instead of wishing to retire as a mere *juge-de-paix*, I should seek to be *procureur-du-roi* at Mantes, and carry everything before me."

"I know what I am doing, madame. The office of *juge-de-paix* is a curate's cob for Monsieur Vitel; it will be a war-horse for me."

Madame de Marville was thus led into making her final confidence to Fraisier.

"You seem to me so devoted to our interests," she said, "that I shall confide to you the difficulties of our position, and also our hopes. At the time of a projected marriage between my daughter and an adventurer who has since become a banker, the president was desirous of adding to the Marville estate by the purchase of some grass-lands, then for sale. When our daughter married the Vicomte Popinot we relinquished that magnificent property, as you are aware; but I am very anxious, my daughter being an only child, to acquire the adjacent grass-lands. Part of these beautiful meadows have been sold to an Englishman, who is about to return to England after living on the estate nearly twenty years. He has built a most charming cottage in a delightful situation, between the park of Marville and the fields which formerly belonged to the estate; and he has bought up, to make a park of his own, woodlands and game-preserves and gardens, at really fabulous prices. The cottage and its dependencies make a fine piece of landscape-gardening; moreover, it adjoins my daughter's park-wall. We can buy the whole, the lands and buildings, for seven hundred thousand francs; the net proceeds of the land are about twenty thousand

francs a year. But if Mr. Wadman knew that we were seeking to buy the property he would no doubt ask two or three hundred thousand more, — he really loses as much as that; for in country neighborhoods they estimate only the value of the land, the buildings go for nothing."

"Madame, you are, I think, so certain of this inheritance from your cousin that I shall be happy to play the rôle of purchaser on your behalf; I will engage to get you the property at the lowest possible price, under private seal, — the usual method in sales of landed estate. I understand such matters: they were my specialty at Mantes. Vatinelle doubled his practice in consequence, for I worked in his name."

"Your liaison with little Madame Vatinelle grew out of it, perhaps. That notary ought to be rich by this time."

"But Madame Vatinelle is so extravagant — Well, madame, don't give yourself any anxiety; I will dish up your Englishman, done to a turn."

"If you can manage it you will earn my everlasting gratitude," she replied. "Adieu, my dear Monsieur Fraisier; we shall hope to see you to-morrow."

Fraisier departed, bowing to Madame de Marville with less servility than on the former occasion.

"I dine to-morrow with Monsieur Camusot de Marville!" he thought to himself. "Well done; I've got those people! But to be absolute master of the whole affair, I must be the legal adviser of that German, in the person of Tabareau, the sheriff of the *juge-de-paix*, — Tabareau, who won't give me his daughter! an only daughter! But he'll let me have her when I am

justice myself. Mademoiselle Tabareau, that tall, red-haired, consumptive girl, possesses in her own right, through her mother, a house in the place Royale; so I shall be eligible for the Chamber. At the death of her father she will have another six thousand francs a year. She 's not handsome; but hang it! when you jump from nothing to eighteen thousand a year, it won't do to look at your feet."

As he walked back along the boulevard to the rue de Normandie, he let himself float upon the current of these golden dreams. He imagined himself forever above the wretchedness of want; he thought how he would marry his friend Poulain to Mademoiselle Vitel, daughter of a *juge-de-paix*. He saw himself, supported by the doctor, a king in his own quarter; he ruled over the elections, — municipal, political, and military. The boulevards seem short indeed when, as we walk along, our ambitions ride upon the wings of fancy.

When Schmucke returned to his friend Pons, he told him that Cibot was dying, and that Rémonencq had gone to fetch Monsieur Trognon, the notary. Pons was struck by the name, which Madame Cibot was forever dragging into her interminable discourse, recommending him this notary as integrity itself. The sick man, whose suspicions had grown intense since the morning, was seized with a vivid idea, which completed the scheme he had formed to baffle Madame Cibot and expose her to the credulous Schmucke.

"Schmucke," he said, taking the hand of the poor German, who was bewildered by so many new and strange events, "there must be great confusion in the

house. If the porter is at the point of death, we shall be at liberty for a time, — that is to say, free from spies; for we are spied upon, you may be sure of that! Go out now, and take a cabriolet, and drive to the theatre; tell Mademoiselle Héloïse, our leading danseuse, that I want to see her before I die; ask her to come here to-night at half-past ten o'clock, when the ballet is over. From there, go to your two friends Schwab and Brunner, and beg them to come here to-morrow at nine o'clock in the morning and ask how I am, as if they had happened to call, and then to come up and see me."

The plan laid by the old artist, who felt himself to be dying, was as follows: He wished to provide for Schmucke by making him his sole heir; and to protect him against all legal quibbling he determined to dictate his will to a notary in presence of witnesses, so that no one could subsequently declare that he was out of his mind. He would thus deprive the Camusots of all pretext for interfering with his last wishes. The name of Trognon made him suspect some machination: he fancied a legal error would be introduced into the will, or that some treachery was premeditated by the Cibot; and he resolved to employ Trognon to witness a will which he intended to write with his own hand, and would then seal up and put away in the drawer of his bureau. He counted on being able to show Schmucke (whom he meant to hide in a wardrobe near his bed) the sight of Madame Cibot getting at the will, unsealing it, reading it, and sealing it up again. He intended to destroy that will the next day, and make another, before a notary, which should be legal and incontestable. When the Cibot treated him like a lunatic and a visionary, he saw

in that pretence a hatred, vengeance, and greed worthy of Madame de Marville; for the poor man, confined to his bed for the last two months, had, during those sleepless nights and those long hours of solitude, gone over and over in his mind all the events of his life.

Sculptors, both ancient and modern, often place on either side the portals of a tomb angels who bear a lighted torch. These rays, as they light the path to death, reveal to the dying the history of their faults and errors. Sculpture here presents a great idea, and gives form to a fact of human nature. Death-beds have their own sagacity. Often young girls of tender years attain the wisdom of old age, speak with the voice of prophecy, judge their own families, and cease to be the dupes of any illusion. That is the poetry of Death. But — and here is a strange truth worthy of note — there are two ways by which men die. This poetry of prophetic intuition, this gift of looking before and after, belongs only to those dying persons whose physical powers are attacked, and who are perishing through the destruction of the vital organs of the body. Victims poisoned, like Louis XIV., by gangrene, consumptive persons, sick men dying like Pons of fever, like Madame de Mortsauf of diseases of the chest, or like soldiers from wounds received in the vigor of life, often attain this sublime lucidity of mind, and their deaths are admirable, in fact amazing; while those who die of what we may call diseases of the intellectual forces, seated in the brain or in the nervous system, — which latter serves as an intermediary between the body and the mind, and furnishes the combustible for thought, — such persons die wholly and at once. In their case mind

and body succumb together. The former — souls without bodies — are the realization of Biblical spectres; the others are corpses. This virgin man, this epicurean Cato, this righteous soul well-nigh pure from sin, had tardily discerned the gall that filled the heart of Madame de Marville: he divined the world at the moment of quitting it; and thus for the last few hours he gayly played his part, like a joyous artist to whom all events are the pretext for a satire or a jest. The last ties which bound him to life — the chains of admiration, the strong links which hold the connoisseur to the masterpieces of art — had snapped that morning. When he saw that Madame Cibot had robbed him, Pons said a Christian farewell to the pomps and vanities of art, to his collection, to his love for the creators of such glorious things; he wished to think only of death, and in the spirit of our ancestors, who placed it among the Christian fêtes. His tenderness for Schmucke inspired the effort to protect him even from beyond the grave. That paternal thought was the motive which made him choose the ballet-dancer as a means of succor against the treacherous natures who surrounded him, and who doubtless would not spare his appointed heir.

Héloïse Brisetout was one of those natures which remain true in a false position. Capable of any trick or folly against her rich adorers, a girl of the style of Jenny Cadine or Josépha, she was, nevertheless, a good comrade, not afraid of any earthly power, by dint of perceiving the weakness of all, and of battling with the police during the carnival and at the *bals champêtres* (which had little that was sylvan about them) at Mabille.

"If she has got my place for her friend Garangeot," thought Pons, "she will be all the more willing to help me."

Schmucke left the house without being observed in the confusion which now reigned in the porter's lodge; and he got back with the utmost rapidity, so as not to leave Pons too long alone.

Monsieur Trognon arrived to make the will just as Schmucke returned. Though Cibot was actually at the point of death, his wife accompanied the notary, brought him into the sick-room, and then retired, leaving Schmucke, Monsieur Trognon, and Pons together; but she caught up a little hand-glass of curious workmanship, and took her station behind the door, which she left ajar. She could thus not only hear but see all that went on at this most vital moment for her interests.

"Monsieur," said Pons, "I have, unfortunately, all my faculties, for I feel that I am dying; and, doubtless by the will of God, I have been spared none of the agonies of death. This is Monsieur Schmucke."

The notary bowed to Schmucke.

"He is the only friend I have on earth," resumed Pons, "and I wish to make him my sole heir. Tell me how to draw my will in such a way that my friend — who is a German, and knows nothing of our laws — may obtain the property without opposition."

"It is possible to contest everything, monsieur," said the notary: "that is one of the inconveniences of human justice; but in the matter of wills, they can be drawn so as to be incontestable."

"In what way?" asked Pons.

"By making them before a notary in presence of witnesses who certify that the testator is in possession of all his faculties, and in case he has neither wife nor children, father nor brother — "

"That is my case. My affections are all centred upon my dear friend Schmucke, whom you see here."

Schmucke wept.

"If you have none but distant collateral relations, the law allows you the free disposal of all your property, real and personal, provided you do not bequeath it in a way to offend public morality. You must have seen wills attacked on account of the eccentricities of the testator; but a will made before a notary is certain to hold good, — the identity of the testator cannot be denied, the notary can prove his sanity, and the signatures are above suspicion. Still, a will drawn in the testator's own handwriting, in legal form and clearly, is seldom open to discussion."

"I have decided, for reasons known to myself, to write my will, at your dictation, with my own hand, and to give it in charge of my friend here. Can that be done?"

"Certainly," said the notary. "Will you write? I will dictate."

"Schmucke, give me my little desk of Boule. Monsieur, dictate in a low voice, if you please; for," he added, "some one may be listening."

"Tell me first what your intentions are," said the notary.

At the end of ten minutes Madame Cibot — who was visible to Pons in a mirror — saw the will sealed, after the notary had examined it and Schmucke had lighted

a candle. Pons next handed the document to Schmucke, telling him to put it away in a private drawer in the secretary. The testator then asked for the key of the drawer, tied it in a corner of his handkerchief, and put the handkerchief under his pillow. The notary — appointed executor by courtesy, and to whom Pons left a valuable picture (one of the things the law permits a notary to accept) — then left the room, and found Madame Cibot in the salon.

"Well, monsieur," she said, "has Monsieur Pons remembered me?"

"My dear woman, you surely don't expect a notary to betray the secrets that are confided to him?" answered Monsieur Trognon. "All that I can tell you is that rapacity and covetousness will be foiled, and a great many hopes baffled. Monsieur Pons has made an admirable will, full of good sense, — a patriotic will, of which I highly approve."

It is difficult to imagine the pitch of curiosity to which Madame Cibot was excited by these words. She went down to pass the night at Cibot's bedside, resolved to put Mademoiselle Rémonencq in her place at two or three o'clock in the morning, and return to Pons's appartement and read the will.

XXV.

THE FICTITIOUS WILL.

The visit of Mademoiselle Héloïse Brisetout at half-past ten at night seemed natural enough to Madame Cibot; but she was so alarmed lest the danseuse should speak of the thousand francs given by Gaudissard that she accompanied her upstairs with all the flattery and politeness due to a sovereign.

"Ah! my dear, you are very much better on your own ground than at the theatre," said Héloïse as they mounted the stairs; "I advise you to stay where you are."

Héloïse, escorted in a carriage by Bixiou, who was just then the friend of her heart, was magnificently attired, for she was going to a soirée given by Mariette, one of the illustrious leading-ladies of the opera. Monsieur Chapoulot, a former fringe-maker in the rue Saint-Denis, the tenant of the first floor, who was just returning from the Ambigu-Comique with his wife and daughter, was dazzled, and his wife also, by meeting such a toilette and such a pretty woman on the staircase.

"Who is it, Madame Cibot?" asked Madame Chapoulot.

"She ain't no account! You can see her skipping half-naked any night for forty sous," whispered the Cibot in reply.

"Victorine!" cried Madame Chapoulot, "my little girl, let madame pass at once!"

The cry of the alarmed mother was understood by Héloïse, who turned round.

"Is your daughter more inflammable than tinder, madame, that you are afraid she will take fire from me?"

Héloïse looked at Monsieur Chapoulot with an agreeable air, and smiled.

"On my word, she is very pretty off the stage!" said Monsieur Chapoulot, lingering on the landing.

Madame Chapoulot pinched her husband till he cried out, and pushed him into their appartement.

"Dear me!" said Héloïse, "this second floor seems as high as a fourth."

"Madame is, however, accustomed to heights," remarked the Cibot, opening the door of the appartement.

"Well, old man," said Héloïse, entering the bedroom where the poor musician was lying, pale and shrunken, upon his bed, "so you are not very well? Everybody at the theatre is anxious about you; but you know how it is, people may have good hearts, and yet they have their own affairs to attend to. There 's Gaudissard, he has been talking of coming to see you day after day, and every morning he is caught by some business or other. But we all love you."

"Madame Cibot," said the sick man, "have the goodness to leave me alone with mademoiselle; we have some theatrical business and my place in the orchestra to talk about. Schmucke will show madame the way out."

Schmucke, at a sign from Pons, opened the door for the Cibot and slipped the bolt behind her.

"Ah! the German blackguard! he is getting corrupted too, is he?" said Madame Cibot, hearing the significant sound. "It's Monsieur Pons has taught him that! You shall pay me dear for it, my little friends," she thought to herself as she went down the stairs. "Bah! if that butterfly of a ballet-girl tells 'em about the thousand francs, I'll swear it ain't nothing but a theatre joke."

And she sat down beside Cibot, who was complaining of his burning stomach, for Rémonencq had given him something to drink in his wife's absence.

"My dear child," said Pons to the danseuse, while Schmucke was getting rid of the Cibot, "I can trust no one but you to send me a notary, an honest man who must be here to-morrow morning at nine o'clock punctually, to make my will. I want to leave all I have to my friend Schmucke. If the poor German should be persecuted in consequence of it, I shall rely on that notary to advise him and defend him; that is why I want one of reputation, — a rich man, above all those considerations which tempt ordinary lawyers; for my poor friend will need a strong supporter. I don't trust Berthier, the son-in-law of Cardot. And you, who know so many people — "

"I know just what you want," said Héloïse: "there's the notary of Florine, the Comtesse du Bruel, Léopold Hannequin, — a virtuous man, who does n't know what a lorette is. He is like a fairy godfather, a worthy soul who won't let you commit any follies with the money you earn. I call him the father of figurantes; for he has inculcated principles of economy in all my friends. In the first place, my dear, he has an income of sixty

thousand francs besides his practice. Then he is a notary such as notaries used to be in the olden time. He is a notary waking or sleeping, walking or sitting still; he has given birth to positively none but little notaries and little notaresses. He is a heavy, pedantic man; but he won't yield to any influence whatever when he is in the exercise of his functions. He has never had a female drain upon him; he is a fossil father of a family! His wife adores him and does n't deceive him, though she is a notary's wife! There is n't anything better in Paris in the way of a notary. He 's patriarchal; he is n't so amusing as Cardot was with Malaga, but he won't run away like that little What 's-his-name who lived with Antonia. I 'll send him to-morrow morning at nine o'clock. Sleep in peace. Besides, I hope you are going to get well, and make us some more pretty music, — though, after all, life is sad enough; managers shilly-shally, kings save their money, ministers hatch plots, and rich men are getting economical. Artists have nothing to rely on but that!" she said, striking her heart. "Yes, it is time to die. Adieu, old fellow!"

"Héloïse, I ask you, above all things, to be silent about all this."

"It is not a theatre matter," she said, "so it 's sacred to an artist."

"Who is your monsieur, little one?"

"The mayor of your arrondissement, Monsieur Baudoyer, as stupid a man as the late Crevel; would you believe that Crevel, one of Gaudissard's old stock-company, died the other day, and actually left me nothing, not so much as a pot of pomatum! That 's what makes me say that our epoch is disgusting."

"What did he die of?"

"His wife. If he had stayed with me he would be alive now. Well, good-by, my dear old fellow! I talk to you about departing this life because I know in ten days I shall see you lounging along the boulevard and ferreting after your pretty curiosities: you are not ill, for your eyes are brighter than I ever saw them."

And Héloïse went away, certain that her protégé Garangeot was secure in his place as leader of the orchestra. Garangeot was her cousin. All the doors on the staircase were ajar, and all the households a-foot to see the leading danseuse pass out. It was a great event in that establishment.

Fraisier, like a bull-dog, which never lets go the morsel he gets between his teeth, was stationed in the porter's lodge beside Madame Cibot when Mademoiselle Héloïse passed under the porte-cochère and called for the door. He knew the will was made, and had just questioned his accomplice; for Maître Trognon declined to say a word about it to him as well as to Madame Cibot. Naturally the man of law noticed the danseuse, and inwardly determined to make some use of this visit *in extremis*.

"My dear Madame Cibot," said Fraisier, "this is a very critical moment for you."

"Ah, yes!" she said. "My poor Cibot! just suppose he should n't live to enjoy what I 'm going to get!"

"The question is, has Monsieur Pons left you anything? That is, are you mentioned in the will at all, or have you been forgotten?" continued Fraisier. "I

represent the natural heirs, and you will get nothing from them in any case. The will is in his own handwriting; it is, therefore, easily attacked. Do you know where the old man put it?"

"In the private drawer of his secretary; and he took the key," she answered, "tied it in a corner of his handkerchief, and put the handkerchief under his pillow. I saw it all."

"Was the will sealed up?"

"Alas, yes!"

"It is a crime to abstract a will and suppress it, but it is only a misdemeanor to look at it; and, anyhow, that would n't be much, — a peccadillo, without witnesses. Does the old man sleep heavily?"

"Yes; but that day when you were examining and valuing the things, and he ought to have slept like a dormouse, did n't he go and wake up? However, I 'll see what can be done. I 'm to relieve Monsieur Schmucke at four o'clock in the morning, and if you like to come then, you shall have the will in your own hands for ten minutes."

"Very good," said Fraisier. "I 'll be here at four o'clock, and I 'll knock very softly."

"Mademoiselle Rémonencq, who takes my place by Cibot, will know you are coming and pull the cord; but you had better tap on the window, so as not to wake nobody."

"All right," said Fraisier. "You will have a light, won't you? A candle will be enough."

At midnight the poor German, overpowered by grief, was sitting in an arm-chair and gazing at Pons, whose

face, drawn like that of a dying man, showed signs of faintness after his exertion which seemed to threaten immediate dissolution.

"I think I have just strength enough to live until to-morrow evening," said Pons philosophically. "My death will doubtless occur, my poor Schmucke, in the course of to-morrow night. As soon as the notary and your two friends have left me in the morning, you must go and fetch our good Abbé Duplanty, the vicar of the church of Saint-François; the worthy man does not know that I am ill. I wish to receive the holy sacraments to-morrow at midday —"

He made a long pause.

"God has not willed that life should be to me what I longed for," continued Pons. "I could have loved a wife and children and family so well! To be cherished by a few beings in a quiet home, was my sole ambition. Life is bitter to all; I have seen others possessing that which I so vainly wished for, and they were not happy. At the close of life the good God let me find unhoped-for consolation by giving me a friend in thee. I have never undervalued or misjudged thee; that is not upon my conscience. My good Schmucke, I have given thee my heart and all my powers of loving. Don't weep, Schmucke, or I must be silent, and it is so sweet to talk to thee of us, — ourself. Had I listened to thy advice, I still might live! Had I left the world and my old habits, I should not have received these mortal wounds. But now I desire to think only of thee."

"Toan 'd dink of me!"

"Do not oppose me; listen to what I say, dear friend. Thou hast the innocence, the guileless nature of a child

that has never left its mother's side. I revere it; I think that God himself takes care of beings like to thee. But men are wicked, and I must forewarn thee. Thou wilt lose thy noble faith, thy sacred credulity, that grace of spotless souls which belongs only to men of genius or to hearts like thine. Presently thou wilt see Madame Cibot, who watched us through the half-closed door; she will come here and take the will I made. I believe the worthless creature will do this towards morning, when she thinks we are asleep. Listen to me attentively, and follow my instructions to the letter. Do you hear me?" cried the sick man.

Schmucke, overwhelmed with grief, and trembling frightfully, had let his head fall over on the back of his chair, and seemed to have fainted away.

"Yez, I hear you, pud as eef you vare a gra-ate tizdanze off. I zeem to zink into der doom — mit you!" said the German, crushed by his misery. He came nearer to Pons, took one hand which he held between his own, and offered an inward prayer.

"What are you murmuring to yourself in German?" asked Pons.

"I bray to Gott to dake us to heemzelf togedder," he answered simply, when he had finished his prayer.

Pons leaned over with difficulty, for he suffered intolerable pain about the liver; but he stooped until he touched Schmucke and kissed him on the forehead, shedding his soul, like a benediction, upon the fellow-creature, the lamb meekly lying at the feet of God.

"Listen to me, my good Schmucke; you must obey the dying."

"I leesten."

"There is an entrance between your room and mine through the little door in your alcove which opens into my cabinet."

"Pud it ees all joked up mit bigchurs."

"You must clear them out immediately, without making too much noise."

"Yez."

"Clear the passage at both ends, into your room and mine; then leave your door ajar. When the Cibot comes to relieve your watch (and she is likely to come earlier than usual) you must go away as if to bed, and seem to be very tired. Try to put on a sleepy air. As soon as she settles in her chair, come through your door and keep watch, there, behind the little muslin curtain of the glass-door in my cabinet, and watch all that happens. You understand?"

"I unterzdant; dat zinful greechur means to purn de vill."

"I can't say what she will do, but I know this, — you will never think her an angel again. Now, give me some music; improvise; make me happy with your inspirations: they will occupy your mind, they will drive out its gloomy thoughts, and fill the sad night with poems."

Schmucke placed himself at the piano. Thus invoked, the inspiration came in a few moments, quickened by the quivering of grief and the agitation which it caused him; transporting the good German, as it ever did, beyond the confines of earth. Sublime themes came to him, on which he wrought his rhythmic fancies, sometimes with the sorrow and Raphaelesque perfection of Chopin, sometimes with the passion and Dantesque grandeur of

Liszt, — two musical organizations which approach the nearest to that of Paganini. Execution brought to this degree of perfection puts the performer on the level of a poet; he is to the composer what an actor is to an author, — a divine interpreter of things divine. During this night, as Schmucke sounded in the ear of Pons the coming harmonies of heaven, the delicious music which made the instruments of art fall from the hands of Saint Cecilia, he was at once Beethoven and Paganini, the creator and the interpreter. Inexhaustible as the nightingale, sublime as the sky beneath which it sings, rich and varied as the forest which it fills with the gurgle of its notes, he surpassed himself, and plunged the old musician, as he listened, into the ecstasy which Raphael painted, and the world goes to see at Bologna.

The poem was interrupted by loud ringing. The maid of the tenant on the first floor came to beg Schmucke, in her master's name, to put a stop to the racket. Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle Chapoulot had been awakened, and could not go to sleep again; and they begged to observe that the day was long enough to rehearse theatrical music, and that no one ought to strum the piano all night in a house in the Marais. It was then three o'clock in the morning. At half-past three, as foretold by Pons, who really seemed to have heard the conference between Madame Cibot and Fraisier, the woman came up to relieve Schmucke. Pons gave his friend a look which meant: "Did I not guess right?" and then he turned over and assumed the attitude of a man who was fast asleep.

Madame Cibot had such firm belief in Schmucke's

simplicity (a quality which is the chief means, as well as the chief reason, of the success of childhood's stratagems) that she did not suspect him of falsehood when he came up to her and said, with an air that was both gloomy and joyful, —

"Bons has hat a treadful naight; his eg-zidemend vas tiapolique! I vas opliged to mek zome muzique to galm heem; and der beoble pelow, dey zend vort dat I moost pe zilend! It ees horriple! it gon-zairns de laife of my frent. I am zo dired, zo dired, mit blaying der muzique all naight long dat I am retty to trob dis mornings."

"My poor Cibot, too, is very ill. Another day like yesterday, and there won't be no hope for him. But what can one do? It 's the will o' God!"

"You are zo goot, your zoul ees zo lofely, dat eef Zipod ties, ve vill lif togedder," said the wily Schmucke.

When simple and upright people begin to dissimulate, they are terrible, — absolutely like children, who lay their traps with the art of savages.

"Well, you go and sleep, my lad!" said the Cibot; "your eyes are just starting out o' your head, you 're so tired. I will say, the one thing as could console me for losing Cibot is to think I should finish my days with a good man like you. You be easy; I 'll lead that Ma'ame Chapoulot a pretty dance! I 'd like to know what right a retired shopkeeper has to set up such pretensions!"

Schmucke established himself in his post of observation. The Cibot had left the door of the appartement ajar; and Fraisier, after entering, closed it very gently. He carried a lighted candle and a piece of extremely

fine brass wire, with which to open the will. The Cibot had no difficulty in abstracting the handkerchief in which the key was knotted, and which was under Pons's pillow; for the sick man had carefully left the end of it in sight below the bolster, and he helped the woman's manœuvre by keeping his face to the wall and lying in an attitude which made it easy to draw away the handkerchief. The Cibot went straight to the secretary, opened it, endeavoring to make as little noise as possible, found the spring of the secret drawer, and ran with the will in her hand into the salon. This last proceeding puzzled Pons to the utmost. As for Schmucke, he was trembling from head to foot, as if he had committed a crime.

"Go back to your post," said Fraisier, receiving the will; "for if he wakes up, he must see you there."

After unsealing the envelope with an adroitness which proved that it was not his first attempt, Fraisier was plunged into profound astonishment by the perusal of the following remarkable document: —

"THIS IS MY WILL.

"To-day, April fifteenth, eighteen hundred and forty-five, I, being of sound mind, as this will, written in presence of Monsieur Trognon, notary, will prove, feeling that I am about to die of the disease which attacked me in the early part of February last, and desiring to dispose of all my property, hereby make known my last wishes as follows: —

"I have always been struck with the perils which often injure and sometimes destroy the great masterpieces of the painter's art. I have pitied noble pictures condemned to travel from country to country, never stationary in any one place where their admirers might go to see them. I have

long thought that those immortal pages of the famous masters ought to be the property of nations, kept incessantly before the eyes of the peoples, like light itself, God's own masterpiece, which shines for all his children.

"And whereas, having passed my life in choosing and collecting pictures by the greatest masters, which pictures are genuine, not repainted, nor even retouched, I have thought with pain that these treasures, which have made the happiness of my life, might come to the hammer, and go to England or to Russia, dispersed and scattered as they were before they came together in my possession; I have therefore resolved to save them from such peril; also to save the magnificent frames which inclose them, and which are all by the best workmen.

"With such motives, therefore, I give and bequeath to the King, to make part and parcel of the Musée du Louvre, the pictures of my collection, on condition, in case the legacy be accepted, that he shall pay to my friend Wilhelm Schmucke an annuity of two thousand four hundred francs.

"If the King, as usufructuary of the Musée, does not accept the legacy on this condition, then the said pictures are to form part of the bequest which I hereby make to my friend Schmucke of all the property of which I die possessed, directing him to give my Monkey's Head by Goya to my cousin the president Camusot; the flower-piece of tulips by Abraham Mignon to Monsieur Trognon, notary (whom I appoint my executor); and to pay Madame Cibot, who has had charge of my household for the past ten years, a yearly sum of two hundred francs.

"And, finally, I request my friend Schmucke to give my Descent from the Cross by Rubens — the sketch of his famous picture at Antwerp — to my parish church, for the decoration of a chapel, in gratitude for the kindness shown to me by Monsieur le vicaire Duplanty, to whom I owe the privilege of dying as a Christian and a Catholic, etc., etc."

"It is ruin!" said Fraisier to himself; "the ruin of all my hopes! Ah! I begin to believe what Madame de Marville told me about the old fellow's malignity —"

"Well?" said the Cibot, coming in.

"Your old man is a monster! He has given everything to the Musée, — to the State! It is n't possible to bring a suit against the State. The will can't be broken. We are robbed, ruined, plundered, assassinated! —"

"What has he left to me?"

"Two hundred francs a year."

"A fine bequest, indeed! Why, he 's an out-and-out rascal!"

"Go in," said Fraisier, "and I 'll put your rascal's will back into its envelope."

XXVI.

IN WHICH THE WOMAN SAUVAGE REAPPEARS.

As soon as Madame Cibot's back was turned, Frasier rapidly substituted a sheet of blank paper in place of the will, which he put into his pocket; then he fastened the envelope so cleverly that he showed the seal to Madame Cibot when she returned, and asked her if she could see the slightest trace of the operation. The Cibot took the envelope, felt it over, found it full, and sighed heavily. She hoped that Fraisier would have burned the fatal paper himself.

"Well, what are we to do, my dear Monsieur Fraisier?" she demanded.

"Ah! that's your affair. As for me, I'm not an heir; but if I had the slightest right to that," he answered, pointing to the collection, "I know very well what I should do."

"That's just what I'm asking you," said the Cibot, rather stupidly.

"There's a fire in the chimney-place," said Fraisier, getting up to go away.

"Any how, nobody but you and I would know it!" said the Cibot.

"It can never be proved that a will existed," returned the man of law.

"And you? what will you do?"

"I? If Monsieur Pons dies without a will, I will guarantee you a hundred thousand francs."

"Oh, I know!" she said; "that's all very well. People will promise mounds o' gold; but when they get hold o' what they're after, and it comes to paying for it, don't I know how they'll chop you down!"

She stopped in time, for she was on the point of telling Fraisier about her transaction with Élie Magus.

"I'm off," said Fraisier. "For your sake, it won't do for me to be seen in this appartement; but I'll meet you below in the lodge."

After closing the outer door, Madame Cibot returned with the will in her hand, fully determined to throw it into the fire; but when she got back into the room and was moving towards the chimney, she was seized by both arms, and found herself in the grasp of Pons and Schmucke, who had been standing close to the wall on each side of the doorway.

"Ah!" screamed the Cibot.

She fell flat on her face in horrible convulsions, whether real or pretended was never known. The sight made such an impression upon Pons that he was seized with deadly faintness, and Schmucke let the Cibot lie where she was while he put him back into his bed. The two friends trembled like persons who, in the execution of a desperate purpose, have gone beyond their strength. When Pons was again in bed, and Schmucke had recovered his breath, they heard sobs. The Cibot, on her knees and dissolved in tears, was stretching out her hands to the two friends and supplicating them with a most expressive pantomime.

"It was pure curiosity!" she cried, seeing that the

pair were noticing her; "indeed it was, my good Monsieur Pons: that 's the failing o' women. But I could n't manage to read your will, and I 've brought it back —"

"Tebart! pegone!" cried Schmucke, springing to his feet, and drawing himself up to his full height in the majesty of his indignation. "You aire a monzder! you haf dried to gill my goot Bons. He vas raight! you aire vorse dan a monzder — you aire a teffel!"

The Cibot, seeing the horror which was painted on the honest German face, rose, proud as Tartufe, cast a glance at Schmucke which made him tremble, and went out, carrying under her gown a glorious little picture by Metzu which Élie Magus had greatly admired and called "a diamond." The Cibot found Fraisier waiting for her in the lodge, devoutly hoping that she had burned the envelope and the blank paper he had substituted for the will; he was much astonished when he saw the convulsed face of his terrified client.

"What has happened?"

"This has happened, my good Monsieur Fraisier, — that under pretence of giving me good advice and directing me what to do, you 've made me lose my annuity forever, and the good-will o' both my gentlemen."

And she launched into one of those cataracts of words for which she had a genius.

"I don't want any idle talk!" said Fraisier dryly, stopping her short. "What 's happened? quick!"

"Well, it was this way —" and she related the scene that had just taken place.

"I had nothing to do with it," said Fraisier. "The two gentlemen doubted your honesty, or they would n't

have set that trap; they were waiting for you, they had been watching you! — You have n't told me all," added the man of law, casting a tigerish look at the woman.

"I! — do you think I'm hiding things from you, after all that we have done together!" she said, trembling.

"But, my dear, I have done nothing reprehensible," said Fraisier, showing plainly that he meant to deny his nocturnal visit to the appartement of the two friends.

The Cibot felt her hair stand on end, and a cold chill ran down her back.

"What do you mean?" she cried, astounded.

"It is a criminal matter: you can be charged with the abstraction of a will," replied Fraisier, coldly.

The Cibot gave a start of terror.

"Make your mind easy, I'm your counsel," he added. "I only wish to show you how easy it would be, in one way or another, to bring about what I warned you of. Come, tell me what you have done to make that innocent German hide himself in that room and watch you."

"Nothing at all; it was only that affair the other day, when I faced Monsieur Pons down about his dreaming he'd seen you. Ever since that day my gentlemen have turned right round against me. And so, as I say, you are the cause of all my troubles; for even if I did lose my control over Monsieur Pons, I was sure of the German, who was talking of marrying me — or living with me; it's all the same thing."

The explanation seemed so plausible that Fraisier was forced to accept it.

"Well, make yourself easy," he said; "I have promised you an annuity, and I shall keep my word. Up to this time, the affair was all hypothetical; but now it is worth hard cash; you shall not have less than twelve hundred francs a year. But remember, my dear Madame Cibot, that you have got to obey my orders, and execute them intelligently."

"Yes, my dear Monsieur Fraisier," said the woman, with servile submission, for she was completely crushed.

"Well, adieu!" returned Fraisier, leaving the lodge and carrying away with him the dangerous will.

He went home joyously, for the document was a powerful weapon.

"I 've got a strong security against Madame de Marville," he said to himself. "If she takes it into her head not to keep her word to me, she shall lose the inheritance."

At daybreak, Rémonencq, after opening his shop and leaving everything in charge of his sister, went, according to a custom he had lately adopted, to inquire for his good friend Cibot, and found Madame Cibot contemplating the picture by Metzu, and asking herself why that little bit of painted wood should be worth so much money.

"Ha! ha!" said Rémonencq, looking over her shoulder, "that 's the only one Monsieur Magus regretted not having; he said if he only had that little thing, his happiness would be complete."

"What will he give for it?" asked the Cibot.

"Now, if you 'll promise to marry me in the year of your widowhood," answered Rémonencq, "I 'll engage to get you twenty thousand francs from Élie Magus;

if you don't marry me, you will never be able to get a thousand francs for it yourself."

"Why not?"

"Because you would be obliged to give a receipt as the owner of it, and the heirs would claim it and bring a suit against you. If you are my wife, I shall sell it to Monsieur Magus, and nothing is required of a dealer but the entry in his books; I shall enter the picture as sold to me by Monsieur Schmucke. Come, put it in my hands! If your husband dies, you'd be worried to death about it; whereas nobody will think it odd that I have got a picture. You know me well enough to trust me. Besides, if you like, I'll give you a receipt."

The criminal situation in which she was caught, compelled the rapacious woman to agree to the proposal which bound her for life to the Auvergnat.

"You are right; bring me a receipt," she said, putting the picture in a bureau drawer and locking it up.

"Neighbor," said Rémonencq in a low voice, drawing the Cibot to the threshold of the door, "I see plainly that we can't save our good Cibot; Doctor Poulain gave him up last night, and said he could n't outlive the day. It's a great misfortune; but, after all, you are not in your right place here. You ought to be in a fine curiosity-shop on the boulevard des Capucines. Do you know that I've laid by nearly a hundred thousand francs in ten years? And if you get as much more some day, I'll engage to make your fortune; that is, if you are my wife. You will be a bourgeoise; my sister shall wait upon you and do the housekeeping, and —"

The tempter was interrupted by the heart-rending moans of the little tailor, whose death-agony was beginning.

"Go away!" said the Cibot; "you're a monster to talk to me like that when my poor man is dying in such a state —"

"Ah! it's because I love you," said Rémonencq; "I can't think of anything else."

"If you loved me, you wouldn't tell me so just now."

And Rémonencq returned home quite sure of marrying the Cibot.

At ten o'clock there was something like a tumult in and around the porter's lodge, for the last sacraments were being administered to the little tailor. All his friends and the concierges, male and female, in the rue de Normandie and the adjacent streets crowded the lodge, the porte-cochère, and the pavement before the house. No one, therefore, paid the least attention to Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, who came with one of his clerks, nor to Schwab and Brunner, all of whom went up to Pons's appartement without being seen by Madame Cibot. The concierge of the opposite house, from whom the notary inquired on which floor Monsieur Pons lived, pointed out the appartement. As for Brunner, who came with Schwab, he had already been to the house to see the collection, and he passed in without a word, taking his companion with him. Pons formally revoked his will of the day before, and bequeathed his whole property to Schmucke. This act accomplished, Pons, after thanking Schwab and Brunner, and earnestly committing the interests of Schmucke to the care

of Monsieur Hannequin, became so exhausted in consequence of the wonderful energy he had displayed in the nocturnal scene with the Cibot, and also in this last act of his earthly life, that Schmucke begged Schwab to go at once and notify the Abbé Duplanty, for Pons was asking for the sacraments, and he himself was unwilling to leave his friend's side.

Sitting at the foot of her husband's bed, Madame Cibot had forgotten Schmucke's breakfast, and in fact she had been turned out of their appartement by the two friends; but the events of the morning, the spectacle of his friend's resigned death — for Pons was leaving the world heroically — had so wrung Schmucke's heart that he felt no hunger.

Nevertheless, about two in the afternoon, having seen nothing of the old German, Madame Cibot, as much from curiosity as from self-interest, begged Rémonencq's sister to go up and see if Schmucke wanted anything. At this moment the Abbé Duplanty, to whom the poor musician had made his last confession, was administering extreme unction. Mademoiselle Rémonencq disturbed that ceremony by reiterated pulls at the bell. Pons having made Schmucke swear that he would admit no one (so great was his fear of being robbed), the old German let Mademoiselle Rémonencq go on ringing, until, quite frightened, she went down and told Madame Cibot that Schmucke would not open the door. This marked circumstance was taken note of by Fraisier. Schmucke, who had never seen any one die, was about to encounter all the difficulties which surround a man in Paris when he has a corpse upon his hands and is, moreover, without help or representative or means of

succor. Fraisier, who knew that relations, if really afflicted, lose their heads at such a time, and who since morning had installed himself in the porter's lodge, so as to be in constant communication with Doctor Poulain, now conceived the idea of himself directing all Schmucke's proceedings.

The following means were employed by the two friends, Fraisier and Poulain, to bring about this important result.

The beadle of the church of Saint-François, a former dealer in glass-ware named Cantinet, lived in the rue d'Orléans in the house adjoining that of Doctor Poulain. Madame Cantinet, who collected the rent of the chairs at Saint-François, had been treated gratuitously by Poulain, to whom she was naturally grateful, and to whom, also, she had often related her troubles. The two Nut-crackers, who attended the services at Saint-François on Sundays and fête-days, were on good terms with the beadle, the verger, the dispenser of holy water, — in short, with the whole ecclesiastical militia called in Paris the "lower clergy," to whom the faithful are in the habit of giving small donations. Madame Cantinet therefore knew Schmucke as well as he knew her. The woman was afflicted with two sources of anxiety which enabled Fraisier to make a blind and involuntary instrument of her. Her son, passionately fond of the theatre, had refused a church career, in which he might have become a verger, and had made his appearance among the supernumeraries of the ballet at the Cirque-Olympique, where he led a disorderly life which greatly distressed his mother, whose purse was often drained by his forced loans. Moreover Cantinet himself, given over to lazi-

ness and liquor, had been driven out of business by those vices. Far from correcting them, the unfortunate man found fresh food for the two passions in his present employment as beadle ; he did no work, and drank with the men who brought the wedding-parties and drove the hearses, and also with the beggars whom the curé relieved, so that by twelve o'clock in the day his face was usually cardinal-colored.

Madame Cantinet saw herself doomed to poverty in her old age after having, as she said, brought a fortune of twelve thousand francs to her husband. The history of her misfortunes, related a hundred times to Doctor Poulain, suggested to him the idea of using her to enable Fraisier to place Madame Sauvage with Pons and Schmucke as cook and servant of all work. To propose Madame Sauvage herself was impossible ; the distrust of the two Nut-crackers was fully roused, and the refusal to open the door to Mademoiselle Rémonencq proved it plainly enough to Fraisier's mind. But it was evident to doctor and lawyer that the pious old musicians would blindly accept any one proposed to them by the Abbé Duplanty. Madame Cantinet, according to their scheme, should be accompanied by Madame Sauvage ; and Fraisier's servant, once there, was quite as good as Fraisier himself.

When the Abbé Duplanty came down, he was detained a moment in the porte-cochère by the concourse of Cibot's friends, who were testifying their respect for the oldest and most esteemed concierge of the neighborhood.

Doctor Poulain bowed to the abbé and took him aside, saying, —

" I am going up to see that poor Monsieur Pons. He

may still recover: it is a question of his submitting to the operation of removing the stones which have formed in the bladder; they can be felt, and they have induced an inflammation which will cause death, — though there may still be time to arrest it. You should use your influence over your penitent and persuade him to submit to the operation; I will answer for his life, provided nothing unfortunate intervenes during the operation."

"I will return as soon as I have carried the sacred vessels to the church," said the Abbé Duplanty; "for indeed Monsieur Schmucke needs religious support."

"I have just learned that he is all alone," said Poulain. "The good German had a little altercation this morning with Madame Cibot, who has been their housekeeper for ten years. It is only a passing quarrel, no doubt; but he must not be left alone, under the circumstances, without help. It is a work of charity to look after him. Here, Cantinet," said the doctor, calling up the beadle, "ask your wife if she is willing to nurse Monsieur Pons and look after the housekeeping for Monsieur Schmucke for a few days in Madame Cibot's place — in fact Madame Cibot, even without this quarrel, must have found a substitute. Madame Cantinet is a trustworthy woman," added the doctor, addressing the Abbé Duplanty.

"You could not choose a better one," answered the worthy priest; "she has the confidence of the society for whom she lets chairs."

A few moments later, Doctor Poulain was noting at Pons's bedside the progress of the old man's dissolution, while Schmucke was vainly imploring his friend to submit to the operation. The old musician only answered

the poor German's supplications by negative signs of the head, occasionally making impatient gestures. At last, gathering up his strength, he cast a terrible glance at Schmucke, and exclaimed: "Let me die in peace!"

Schmucke nearly died of grief; but he took the hand of his friend, kissed it softly, and held it between his own hands, endeavouring to transfuse his life once more into Pons. At that moment Doctor Poulain, hearing the bell ring, went to the door and admitted the Abbé Duplanty.

"Our poor patient," said Poulain, "is beginning his last agony. He will die in a few hours; you will probably have to send a priest to watch with the body to-night. But we must now employ Madame Cantinet and a helper to take charge of the appartement for Monsieur Schmucke. He is incapable of attending to anything: I fear for his reason; and there is property here which ought to be looked after by trustworthy people."

The Abbé Duplanty, a good and worthy priest, guileless and without suspicion, was struck by the justice of Doctor Poulain's remarks, and he made a sign to Schmucke from the threshold of the death-chamber to come out and speak to him. Schmucke could not bring himself to let go the hand of Pons, which was cramped and clasped to his as if the dying man were falling from a precipice and sought to fasten upon something that might save him. But those about to die are often, as we know, a prey to hallucinations which impel them to seize everything about them, like people in haste to save their valuables at a fire; and Pons suddenly released Schmucke's hand to grasp the bed-

clothes and draw them round his body, with a horrible and significant movement of haste and avarice.

"What can you do, all alone, when your friend dies?" said the good priest to the German, who then came to him; "you have lost Madame Cibot—"

"Matame Zipod ees a mondzder who has gilled Bons!" he said.

"But you must have some one with you," interposed Doctor Poulain, "for the corpse will have to be watched to-night."

"I vill va-atch, I vill bray to Gott," answered the innocent German.

"But you must eat; who will cook for you?" said the doctor.

"Zorrow has daken avay mein abbedide," said Schmucke, naïvely.

"But," said Poulain, "the death must be sworn to by witnesses, the body must be prepared for burial and sewn in a winding-sheet, the funeral must be ordered at the Pompes Funèbres, the nurse who takes charge of the corpse and the priest who watches at night, must have their meals; and how can you attend to such things all alone? People can't be allowed to die like dogs in the capital of civilization."

Schmucke opened a pair of frightened eyes, and was seized with a momentary attack of madness.

"Pud Bons shall nod tie! I vill zafe heems!"

"You can't last much longer without sleep; and who is there now to take your place? There is still something to do for Monsieur Pons; he must have his drink, and his medicines."

"Ah, dat ees drue!" said Schmucke.

"Well," remarked the Abbé Duplanty, "I think of giving you Madame Cantinet, — an honest, worthy woman."

These details of the last duties to his friend so overcame Schmucke that he longed to die with Pons.

"He is a mere child," said the doctor to the abbé.

"A ji-ild!" repeated Schmucke mechanically.

"Come!" said the vicar; "I will go and speak to Madame Cantinet and send her to you."

"Don't give yourself that trouble," said the doctor; "she is my neighbor, and I am now on my way home."

Death is like an invisible assassin with whom the dying struggle; in the final contest they receive the last blows, they endeavor to strike back, they resist desperately. For Pons this supreme moment had now come; he uttered groans, mingled with cries. Schmucke, the Abbé Duplanty, and Poulain ran to his side. Suddenly, as the last stab reached his vitality and cut the thread which holds the soul to the body, Pons regained, for a few moments, the perfect quietude which follows the dying struggle; he came to himself; the serenity of death was on his face, and he looked on those around him with a smile that was almost joyful.

"Ah! doctor," he said, "I have suffered much; but you are right, I am better now. Thanks, my good abbé; I was missing Schmucke —"

"Schmucke has not eaten anything since the night before last; it is now four o'clock. You have no longer any one to look after you, and it would be dangerous to recall Madame Cibot —"

"She is capable of anything!" said Pons, showing his horror at the very name of the Cibot. "You are

right; Schmucke needs some honest person to look after him."

"The Abbé Duplanty and I," said the doctor, "have been thinking about you both — "

"Ah, thank you!" said Pons; "I did not reflect —"

"And the abbé has suggested Madame Cantinet — "

"Who lets the chairs?" cried Pons; "yes, an excellent creature."

"She does not like Madame Cibot," said Poulain, "and she will take good care of Monsieur Schmucke."

"Send her to me, my good Monsieur Duplanty, she and her husband; then I shall be easy: they will not rob me."

Schmucke had again laid hold of Pons's hand, and was holding it joyfully, believing that life and health had come back to him.

"Let us go, monsieur l'abbé," said the doctor. "I will send Madame Cantinet at once; I see how it is, — probably she will not find Monsieur Pons living."

XXVII.

DEATH AS IT IS.

While the Abbé Duplanty was inducing the dying man to employ Madame Cantinet, Fraisier had sent for the woman and subjected her to his corrupting talk and to the crafty influence of his wily power, — a power which it was difficult to resist. Madame Cantinet — a yellow, shrivelled woman with large teeth and pallid lips, dulled by misfortune, like many women of the lower classes, and reduced to find her whole happiness in petty daily profits — soon agreed to take Madame Sauvage with her as assistant in Pons's household. Fraisier's servant had already got her cue. She had promised to weave a wire net round the two musicians, and watch over them as a spider watches a captured fly. Madame Sauvage was to receive in return for her trouble a license for the sale of tobacco. Fraisier thus found a means of getting rid of his pretended foster-mother, as well as of putting a spy and a gendarme over Madame Cantinet. As the appartement of the two Nut-crackers had a small kitchen and a servant's room, Madame Sauvage could sleep on the premises and cook for Schmucke. At the moment when the two women, brought by Doctor Poulain, presented themselves, Pons had just drawn his last breath; but Schmucke was not aware of it, and he still clasped his friend's hand,

though the warmth was leaving it by degrees. He motioned to Madame Cantinet not to speak; but the soldierly bearing of Madame Sauvage astonished him so much that he made an involuntary gesture of fear, — to which, indeed, that male woman was accustomed.

"Madame," whispered Madame Cantinet, presenting her, "is sent by Monsieur Duplanty. She has been cook to a bishop; she is honesty itself: and she will do the cooking."

"You can speak out loud," said the powerful and asthmatic Sauvage; "the poor gentleman is dead: he has just gone."

Schmucke uttered a piercing cry; he felt Pons's icy hand stiffening within his own, and he sat with staring eyes looking fixedly into those of Pons, whose expression would have driven him mad if Madame Sauvage, doubtless accustomed to such scenes, had not gone to the bed and held a mirror to the dead man's lips. As no breath clouded the glass, she hastily separated Schmucke's hand from that of the corpse.

"Let go, monsieur," she said, "or you won't be able to get loose; you don't know what bones are when they harden. Dead bodies soon stiffen. If you don't prepare them while they are still warm, you are sometimes obliged to break their limbs."

It was, therefore, this horrible woman who closed the poor musician's eyes. Then, with the methodical habit of a sick-nurse, — a business she had followed for ten years, — she took off the dead man's clothing, stretched him out at full length, fastened the hands to each side of the body, and drew the sheet over him, precisely as a shopman makes up a parcel of goods.

"I want a sheet to wrap him in: where can I get one?" she said to Schmucke, who was speechless with terror at the sight. To witness this species of packing, after watching the profound respect with which religion treats the creature destined to so glorious a future in the heavens, and to see his friend treated like a chattel, was an anguish fit to dissolve the very elements of thought.

"Dake vat you laike!" answered Schmucke mechanically.

It was the first time the innocent creature had seen a man die, — and that man was Pons, the only friend, the only being who had ever understood and loved him!

"Then I shall go and ask Madame Cibot where the sheets are," said the Sauvage.

"We must have a flock-bed for this lady," said Madame Cantinet to Schmucke.

Schmucke made a sign with his head, and burst into tears. Madame Cantinet left the poor soul in peace; but at the end of an hour she returned, and said to him, —

"Monsieur, have you any money to give us to buy some necessary things?"

Schmucke turned a look on Madame Cantinet that might have disarmed the most ferocious enemy; he pointed to the white, sharp face of the dead as if it were the sole answer that could be given.

"Dake all, and led me mourn and bray," he said, kneeling down.

Madame Sauvage had gone to announce the death to Fraisier, who rushed in a cabriolet to Madame de Marville and requested her to have the power of attorney,

which should give him the right of representing the heirs, ready for the morrow.

"Monsieur," said Madame Cantinet to Schmucke an hour after her last question, "I have been to see Madame Cibot, who knows all about your household, and asked her to tell me where to find the things; but she has just lost Monsieur Cibot, and she has half crazed me with her talk — Monsieur, please listen to me."

Schmucke looked at the woman, who had no conception of her own cruelty; for the lower classes habitually endure great mental griefs stolidly.

"Monsieur, we must have linen for the winding-sheet, also we want money to buy a flock-bed for the cook; and we need kitchen-utensils, plates, dishes, glasses, for a priest will be here to-night, and there is absolutely nothing in the kitchen."

"Yes, monsieur," began the Sauvage, "I must have wood and coal to prepare the dinner, and I don't see any. It is n't surprising, as it seems Madame Cibot supplied you with everything — "

"My dear lady," said Madame Cantinet, pointing to Schmucke, who lay at the dead man's feet in a state of semi-insensibility, "you would n't believe me, but you see for yourself he can't answer anything."

"Well, my dear," returned the Sauvage, "I 'll show you what 's to be done in that case."

So saying, she cast about the room a look such as thieves cast when they try to guess the places where money is hidden. She went straight to Pons's bureau and pulled out the top drawer, saw the bag in which Schmucke had put away the remainder of the money derived from the sale of the pictures, and showed

it to Schmucke, who made a sign of mechanical consent.

"Here's money, my dear," said the Sauvage to Madame Cantinet. "I'll count it, and take as much as we shall want for wine and provisions and lights, — in short, everything; for they really have nothing at all. Do look in the drawer and see if you can find a sheet to wrap round the body. They told me the poor man was a simple creature; but he's worse than that. I'm sure I don't know what he is, — a new-born babe; and we shall have to feed him with a spoon."

Schmucke looked at the two women and at all they did, exactly as an idiot might have looked at them. Exhausted with grief, sunk into a state that was half cataleptic, he never ceased to contemplate the face of Pons, which held him by a spell as the lines grew purer and clearer in the peace of death. He hoped to die; to all else he was indifferent. The room might have been in flames, and he would not have stirred.

"There are twelve hundred and fifty-six francs," said the Sauvage.

Schmucke shrugged his shoulders. When the Sauvage attempted to prepare the body for burial, and to measure the linen over it so as to cut out the winding-sheet and sew it on, a frightful struggle took place between herself and the unfortunate German. Schmucke was like a dog who bites all who attempt to touch the body of his master. Madame Sauvage, getting impatient, seized him, thrust him into an arm-chair, and held him there with herculean power.

"Come, my dear, sew up the corpse in the sheet while I hold him," she said to Madame Cantinet.

When the operation was over, the Sauvage let Schmucke go back to his place at the foot of the bed, and said to him,—

"Can't you understand? We had to truss up the poor man properly, as a corpse."

Schmucke wept; the two women left him and went to take possession of the kitchen, where, between them, they soon collected all the necessaries of life. After running up a preliminary bill of three hundred and sixty francs, Madame Sauvage prepared a dinner for four persons; and what a dinner! The pheasant of cobblers — a fat goose — was the solid dish; then came a sweet omelet, a salad of vegetables, and the sacramental *pot-au-feu*, whose ingredients were so extravagant in quantity that the broth was as thick as jelly. At nine o'clock in the evening the priest, sent by the vicar to watch beside the body of Pons, came with the beadle, Cantinet, who brought four wax-tapers and the church candlesticks. The priest found Schmucke lying at full length on the bed beside his friend, holding him tightly clasped in his arms. It required the authority of religion to induce Schmucke to part from the body. He fell on his knees, and the priest sat down comfortably in an arm-chair. While the latter read his prayers, and Schmucke, kneeling before the body of Pons, besought God to reunite him to his friend by a miracle, that he might be buried in the same grave, Madame Cantinet went to the Temple and bought a flock-bed and bedding all complete for Madame Sauvage, making havoc in the twelve hundred and fifty-six francs discovered in the bureau drawer. At eleven o'clock at night Madame Cantinet came to see if Schmucke would eat a morsel.

The German made signs that he was to be left in peace.

"Your supper is ready, Monsieur Pastelot," she said to the priest.

Schmucke, left alone, smiled like a madman who sees that he is free to accomplish a desire comparable only to the longing of a pregnant woman. He flung himself beside Pons and held him once more tightly clasped. The priest came back at midnight and rebuked Schmucke, who let go his grasp and returned to prayer. At daybreak the priest went away. At seven o'clock in the morning Doctor Poulain came to see Schmucke, and kindly tried to make him eat; but the German refused.

"If you eat nothing now, you will feel hungry when you return," said the doctor; "for you must go to the mayor's office, with some one who can identify you, to declare the decease of Monsieur Pons and get the burial certificate."

"I!" exclaimed the German, terrified.

"Who should it be? You were the only person who saw him die."

"I haf no zdrengd," answered Schmucke, imploring pity of Doctor Poulain.

"Take a carriage," said the hypocritical doctor, gently. "I have made out the certificate of the death. Get some one about the house to accompany you. These two women will take care of the rooms in your absence."

It is difficult to imagine what these vexations of the law are to a real grief, — enough, surely, to make us hate civilization, and prefer the customs of savages. At

nine o'clock Madame Sauvage brought Schmucke downstairs, holding him under the arms, and he was obliged, when he got into the hackney-coach, to ask Rémonencq to accompany him and declare the death at the mayor's office. Wherever we turn, and in all matters, inequality of conditions is manifest in Paris, — a city drunk with the idea of equality! This immutable force of circumstances is seen even in the events attending a death. In wealthy families, a relation, a friend, a business agent, spares the mourners all knowledge of the hideous details; but in this, as in the assessment of taxes, the masses, the proletaries, have to bear the burden of such horrors without assistance.

"Ah! you've good reason to regret him," said Rémonencq as a groan escaped the poor martyr; "he was a very worthy man, a very honest man, who has left behind him a fine collection. But don't you see, monsieur, you, who are a stranger here, are likely to get into a deal of trouble? — for they say Monsieur Pons has left you everything."

Schmucke was not listening; he was plunged in such grief that he was very nearly out of his mind. The soul has its lock-jaw as well as the body.

"You ought to be represented by a lawyer or a business agent."

"Peazenez achend," repeated Schmucke mechanically.

"You'll see that you'll have to get some one to act for you. If I were you, I should find some man of experience, a man known in the neighborhood, a trustworthy man. I myself, in my little business, I employ Tabareau, the sheriff's officer. If you give a power of

attorney to his head-clerk you will have no anxiety yourself."

This suggestion, first made by Fraisier, and approved by Rémonencq and the Cibot, stuck in Schmucke's memory; for in certain moments, when grief congeals the soul, as it were, and arrests its functions, the memory retains impressions which mere accident has imprinted upon it. Schmucke heard Rémonencq, though he continued to look at him with an eye so devoid of intelligence that the Auvergnat said no more.

"If he is such an imbecile as that," thought Rémonencq, "I shall be able to buy the whole heap of those things upstairs for a hundred thousand francs, — that is, if they are really his — Monsieur, here we are at the mayor's office."

Rémonencq was forced to lift Schmucke out of the coach and support him under the arms to get him into the office for civil certificates, where Schmucke found himself in the midst of a wedding-party. The poor German was a prey to an anguish like that of the Saviour of men.

"Is this Monsieur Schmucke?" asked a man in black clothes, addressing the German, who was bewildered at hearing his own name.

"Well," said Rémonencq, "what do you want with him? Let him alone; don't you see he is in trouble?"

"Monsieur has just lost his friend, and doubtless wishes to honor his memory in a worthy manner, as the property is left to him," said the stranger. "Monsieur will certainly not be parsimonious; he will of course buy a grave in perpetuity. Monsieur Pons was

a lover of art: it would be a pity not to put upon his tomb a group of Music, Painting, and Sculpture, — three fine figures represented as weeping — "

Rémonencq made the gesture of an Auvergnat to drive the man away; but the man replied by another gesture, meaning, "Let me alone; I know what I am about," which the other understood.

"I am an agent for the house of Sonet & Co., contractors for mortuary monuments," resumed the runner, whom Walter Scott might have called "the young man of the tombs." "If monsieur would be pleased to give us an order, we will save him the annoyance of going to the cemetery to buy the ground necessary for the burial of the friend now lost to him and to the arts — "

Rémonencq nodded his head in assent, and nudged Schmucke with his elbow.

"We take charge of all these formalities every day for many families," said the man, encouraged by the Auvergnat's nod. "In the first moments of grief it is so hard for an heir to attend to such details himself, and we are glad to do these little services for our customers. The price of our monuments, monsieur, is regulated by a tariff, — so much a foot in free-stone, so much in marble. We also dig the graves for family tombs,— in short, we undertake the whole affair, at reasonable prices. Our house put up the magnificent monument over the beautiful Esther Gobseck, also that of Lucien de Rubempré, which is one of the finest ornaments of Père-Lachaise. We employ the best workmen — I advise monsieur to beware of the small undertakers, who do things in a shabby way," he added, observing

that another man in black was bearing down upon them, in the interests of another house of monumental sculpture.

It has often been said that death is the end of a journey; few persons realize how close the parallel is in Paris. The dead man, above all if he was a man of quality, is greeted on the sombre shore as though he were a traveller arriving at his destination, where all the runners of the various hotels harass him with their recommendations. No one, if we except certain philosophers and a few families sure of being long-lived, who build themselves tombs just as they build themselves houses, ever thinks of death and its attendant consequences. Death always comes too soon; moreover, a feeling, easily understood, keeps the survivors from supposing it possible. Therefore nearly all who lose father, mother, wife, or children, are immediately assailed by those interested in the business of death, and who profit by the bewilderment of grief to obtain an order for their services. In former times the agents for sepulchral monuments used to group themselves in the vicinity of the famous cemetery of Père-Lachaise, where they formed a lane called the "Street of Tombs," and assailed the heirs as they left the grave or the gates of the cemetery; but, little by little, competition, the genius of speculation, has pushed them to greater assurance, and they have now established themselves in the neighborhood of the mayor's offices. In fact, these runners, with the plan of a tomb in hand, often work their way into the house of death.

"I am doing business with monsieur," said the agent for the Maison Sonet to the new-comer.

"Pons, deceased!" called out the clerk. "Where are the witnesses?"

"Come, monsieur," said the mortuary agent, addressing Rémonencq.

Rémonencq requested the man to lift Schmucke, who was sitting like an inert mass upon a bench, and together they led him to a balustrade, behind which the clerk who drew up the certificates for burial sheltered himself from the rush of public grief. Rémonencq, who was now Schmucke's protector, was reinforced at this moment by Doctor Poulain, who came to give the necessary information as to the age and birthplace of Pons. The signatures once appended, Rémonencq and the doctor, followed by the runner, carried the poor German back to the coach, into which the eager agent, determined to obtain the coveted order, managed to slip. The Sauvage, who was watching on the steps of the porte-cochère, took Schmucke, half fainting, in her arms, and with the help of Rémonencq and the man from the Maison Sonet, got him upstairs.

"He is going to be ill," said the runner, who was bent on ending his own affair satisfactorily.

"I should think so!" returned Madame Sauvage; "he has wept for twenty-four hours, and won't eat anything. Nothing destroys the stomach like grief."

"Now, my dear client," said the runner to Schmucke, "take a little broth. You have so many things to do; you must go to the Hôtel de Ville and buy the grave over which you intend to erect a monument to that friend of the arts which shall testify your gratitude —"

"Why, he ought to have more sense," said Madame

Cantinet, coming in at the moment with the broth and some bread.

"My dear monsieur," said Rémonencq, "if you are so feeble, you ought really to get some one to represent you; for you have a host of things to do. You must order the funeral procession: you don't want your friend to be buried like a pauper?"

"Come, come, my good monsieur," said the Sauvage, seizing a moment when Schmucke's head fell on the back of the chair to pour a spoonful of soup into his mouth, and continuing to feed him like an infant, in spite of himself. "There, now you are sensible, monsieur; and if you wish to give way to your grief quietly, you must choose some one to represent you—"

"As monsieur intends to erect a fine monument to his friend," said the runner, "he need only put the whole matter into my hands, and I will attend to it—"

"What's that? what's that?" cried the Sauvage. "Has monsieur given you any orders? Who are you?"

"An agent for the house of Sonet & Co., my good lady; the largest establishment for monumental statuary in Paris," answered the man, pulling out a card and presenting it to the powerful Sauvage.

"Ah! very good, very good; you'll be sent for when they think proper. You can't take advantage of the state monsieur is in. You see very plainly that he is out of his mind—"

"If you will manage to get us the order," whispered the agent of the Maison Sonet in the ear of Madame Sauvage as he drew her out upon the landing, "I am able to offer you forty francs."

"Well, give me your address," said the Sauvage, becoming civilized.

Schmucke, finding himself alone, and really feeling better for his forced meal of broth and bread, returned quickly to the side of Pons and again knelt down to pray. He was lost in the abysses of his grief, when he was roused from the void, as it were, by a young man dressed in black, who said to him for the eleventh time, —

"Monsieur!"

The poor martyr heard the call because he was twitched by the sleeve of his coat.

"Vat ees id now?" he asked.

"Monsieur, we owe to Dr. Gannal a sublime discovery. We do not deny his glory; he has restored to practice the miracles of ancient Egypt. Nevertheless, we have made improvements by which we obtain astonishing results. Therefore, if you wish to see your friend as he was in life —"

"Zee heems — in laife!" cried Schmucke. "Vill he spick to me?"

"Not absolutely — speech itself will be absent," replied the agent for embalming; "but he will remain through all eternity such as the art of embalming will show him to you. The operation will take only a few minutes. An incision into the carotid artery, and one injection suffices. But there 's no time to be lost; if you wait half an hour longer you will lose the tender satisfaction of preserving the body of your friend."

"Pegone! der teffel dake you! Bons ees a zoul, und dat zoul ees een de zkies."

"The man has n't a bit of gratitude," said the young rival of Dr. Gannal as he went through the porte-cochère; "he refuses to have his friend embalmed."

"What can you expect, monsieur?" said Madame Cibot, who had just had her darling embalmed. "He 's the legatee; now that he 's got all he wanted, the deceased ain't nothing to him."

XXVIII.

SCHMUCKE'S MARTYRDOM CONTINUED; SHOWING HOW PEOPLE DIE IN PARIS.

An hour later, Schmucke saw Madame Sauvage enter the room, followed by a man in black who appeared to be a workman.

"Monsieur," she said, "Cantinet has been good enough to send you this person, who supplies the coffins for the parish."

The coffin-maker bowed with an air of condolence and commiseration, but like a man sure of his position and aware that he is indispensable. He looked at the body with the eye of a connoisseur.

"How does monsieur wish to have it?" he said. "In common wood, or plain oak, or oak lined with lead? Oak lined with lead is very stylish. The body seems to have the ordinary dimensions."

He felt for the feet, so as to measure the body.

"One mètre, seventy," he added. "Monsieur no doubt intends to order a funeral service at the church?"

Schmucke flung a look at the man such as madmen dart when they are about to make an attack.

"Monsieur," said Madame Sauvage, "you really must employ some one to attend to all these details for you."

"Yez," said the victim at last.

"Do you want me to go and fetch Monsieur Tabareau? for you 'll have many more things on your shoulders presently. Monsieur Tabareau, let me tell you, is the most honest man in the neighborhood."

"Yez, Monsir Dapareau, dey tid spick to me of heems," answered the vanquished Schmucke.

"Very good; monsieur shall be left in peace, and free to indulge his grief, when he has once had a talk with an agent and given him full powers."

About two o'clock the head-clerk of Monsieur Tabareau, a young man who considered that he was destined to the career of sheriff, modestly presented himself. Youth has amazing privileges; it excites no alarm. The young man sat down beside Schmucke and waited for the right moment to speak to him. This consideration touched Schmucke.

"Monsieur," said the youth, "I am the head-clerk of Monsieur Tabareau, who has sent me here to look after your interests and attend to all the details of the funeral. Is it your wish that I should do so?"

"You gannod za-afe my laife, I haf nod long to leef; pud vill you led me tie in beace?"

"You shall not be troubled," answered Villemot.

"Denn, vat moost I do?"

"Sign this paper, in which you appoint Monsieur Tabareau your proxy in all matters concerning the inheritance."

"Gif it to me!" said the German, wishing to sign instantly.

"No, it is my duty to read over the instrument to you."

"Reet id."

Schmucke paid not the slightest attention to the reading of what was a general power of attorney; and then he signed it. The young man took his orders for the funeral, for the purchase of the ground where Schmucke wished the grave to be, and also for the services at the church, assuring him that he should have no further trouble, and that no demands for money should be made upon him.

"To pe levd in beace, I vould gif all dat I boz-ezz," said the unfortunate man, who once more knelt down beside the body of his friend.

Fraisier triumphed; the legatee could not make one step outside the circle where the Sauvage and Villemot now held him fast.

There is no grief that sleep cannot conquer. Towards evening the Sauvage found Schmucke lying asleep beside the bed on which the body of Pons was stretched; she carried him off, and laid him maternally in his own bed, where he slept until the morrow. When he woke, — that is to say when, after this truce, his sorrows returned upon him, — the body of Pons was lying in the porte-cochère, in the *chapelle-ardente* of a funeral of the third class; he sought his friend in vain throughout the appartement, which seemed to him a vast loneliness filled only with cruel memories. Madame Sauvage, who managed Schmucke with the authority of a nurse over her suckling, compelled him to eat some breakfast before starting for the church. While the poor victim forced himself to swallow food, she called his attention, with lamentations worthy of Jeremiah, to the fact that he did not possess a black coat. Schmucke's wardrobe,

like his dinner, had come down, even before his friend's illness, to its simplest expression, — two coats and two pairs of trousers.

"You are not going as you are to the funeral? It would be an abomination that would disgrace you in the neighborhood!"

"How moost I co?"

"In black."

"Pla-ag!"

"Propriety requires —"

"Brobriedy! I toan'd gare for any zooch nonzenze," said the poor man, driven to the last pitch of exasperation to which suffering can force a childlike soul.

"Why, he's a monster of ingratitude!" cried the Sauvage, turning to a man whose sudden appearance in the room made Schmucke shudder.

This functionary, magnificently dressed in black cloth, with black knee-breeches and black-silk stockings, white cuffs, spotless white muslin cravat, white gloves, and wearing a silver chain, from which hung a medal, — an official of the type of those who conduct all public obsequies, — held in his hand an ebony wand, and, beneath his left arm, a three-cornered hat with a tricolor cockade; these were his insignia of office.

"I am the master of ceremonies," said this personage in a soft voice.

Accustomed, in the daily exercise of his functions, to manage funerals and enter families plunged in affliction, real or feigned, this man, in common with all his colleagues, spoke in a low voice, gently. He was decent, civil, and seemly by profession, — like a statue

representing the Spirit of Death. This announcement gave Schmucke a nervous shock, as though he had seen the executioner.

"Monsieur is the son, the brother, or the father of the deceased?" inquired the official.

"I am all dat, and more, — I am hees frent," said Schmucke, with a burst of tears.

"Are you the heir?" asked the master of ceremonies.

"Heir!" repeated Schmucke; "I toan'd gare for anyding in dis vorld."

"Where are the relations?" demanded the official.

"Here, all of dem!" cried Schmucke, pointing to the pictures and the curiosities. "Neffare, neffare tid dese relachions mek mein goot Bons creef! Here ees all he lofed, mit me!"

"He is crazy, monsieur," said the Sauvage to the master of ceremonies; "it is useless to listen to him."

Schmucke had reseated himself with an expression that was once more idiotic, as he mechanically wiped away his tears. At this moment Villemot, the head-clerk of Monsieur Tabareau, appeared; and the master of ceremonies, recognizing the person who had called to order the funeral, turned to him and said: —

"Well, monsieur, it is time to start: the hearse is here; but I have seldom seen such a procession as this will be. Where are the relations and friends?"

"We did not have much time," answered Monsieur Villemot, "and this gentleman was plunged in such grief that he could think of nothing; there is only one relation."

The master of ceremonies looked at Schmucke with an expression of pity, for that expert in suffering was

able to distinguish the true from the false; and he went close to him.

"Come, my dear monsieur," he said; "think of doing honor to your friend's memory."

"We have forgotten," said Villemot, "to send notices of the funeral; but I did take pains to send a messenger to Monsieur Camusot de Marville, who is the relation to whom I alluded. There are no friends, and I don't suppose the company of the theatre where the deceased led the orchestra, intend to come. The gentleman is left, I think, sole legatee."

"Then he must be chief mourner," said the master of ceremonies. "Have n't you a black coat?" he added, examining Schmucke's clothes.

"I am all pla-ag eenzite," said the poor German in heart-rending tones; "zo pla-ag, zo pla-ag, I veel I am apoud to tie! Gott vill haf merzy ubon me, and u-naight me in der gra-afe mit meinem freund, — zo vill I dank heem!"

He clasped his hands.

"I have often told our administration, which has already introduced such improvements," said the master of ceremonies, addressing Villemot, "that it ought to keep a mourning wardrobe and let out black garments to the heirs; it is a thing that is getting more and more necessary every day. However, if monsieur is the heir, he really must put on a mourning cloak, and the one I have here will wrap him so completely that no one will observe the impropriety of his dress. Will you have the goodness to rise?" he said to Schmucke.

Schmucke rose, but he tottered on his legs.

"Hold him up," said the master of ceremonies to the head-clerk, "as you are his proxy."

Villemot supported Schmucke by grasping him under the arms, and the master of ceremonies caught up the ample and horrible black mantle which they throw over heirs when they follow the hearse on foot from the house of death to the church, and fastened it around Schmucke's neck by tying the black silk cords under his chin. Schmucke was thus duly apparelled as the heir.

"Now, here's another great difficulty," said the master of ceremonies. "We must have four persons to hold the four corners of the pall. If there are no friends, how are we to get pall-bearers? It is now half-past ten," he added, looking at his watch; "they are waiting for us at the church."

"Here comes Fraisier!" cried Villemot, very imprudently.

No one, however, took notice of this admission of complicity.

"Who is the gentleman?" asked the master of ceremonies.

"Oh! he comes from the family."

"What family?"

"The disinherited family. He is the proxy of Monsieur le président Camusot."

"Very good," said the master of ceremonies, in a tone of satisfaction; "we can at least have two of the tassels held, — one by you, the other by him."

Satisfied by the fact of a couple of tassels being held, the master of ceremonies fetched two splendid pairs of white doeskin gloves, and presented them first to Fraisier, and then to Villemot, with a polite air.

"Will these gentlemen be kind enough each to take a corner of the pall?" he said.

Fraisier, all in black, dressed with care, white cravat, official demeanor, was enough to cause a shudder; he seemed to carry a hundred briefs.

"Certainly, monsieur," he replied.

"If only two more persons would come," said the master of ceremonies, "the four tassels could all be held."

At this moment the indefatigable agent for the house of Sonet & Co. made his appearance, followed by the only man who had thought of Pons and wished to pay him the last duties. This was a jack-of-all-work at the theatre named Topinard, whose business it was, among other things, to lay out the scores on the desks in the orchestra, and to whom Pons gave a monthly gratuity of five francs, knowing him to be the father of a family.

"Ah! Dobinard," cried Schmucke, recognizing him; "you lofed Bons!"

"Yes, monsieur, and I have called every day to inquire for him —"

"Effry tay? Boor Dobinard!" said Schmucke, grasping him by the hand.

"Perhaps they took me for a relation, for they treated me very ill. It was no use saying I came from the theatre and wanted to know how Monsieur Pons was; they said they were up to such dodges. I begged them to let me see the poor sick gentleman, but they would n't let me come up."

"Dat in-vamooz Zipod!" said Schmucke, pressing the horny hand of the man-of-all-work to his heart.

"He was a king of men, that good Monsieur Pons. He gave me a hundred sous every month; he knew I

was poor, and had three children and a wife. My wife has gone to the church."

"I vill ti-fite my lasd gruzd mit you," cried Schmucke, in his joy at having some one near him who loved Pons.

"Will monsieur take one of the tassels?" said the master of ceremonies; "that makes up the four pall-bearers."

The runner for the house of Sonet had been easily persuaded to take a tassel, more especially when he saw the fine pair of gloves which, according to custom, was to be his perquisite.

"It is a quarter to eleven! we must start immediately; they are waiting at the church," said the master of ceremonies.

The six persons descended the stairs.

"Close the door of the appartement, and stay inside," said Fraisier to the two women, who were standing on the landing. "Mind what I say, if you wish to keep the place, Madame Cantinet! It is forty sous a-day for you."

By an accident, which is not at all uncommon in Paris, there were two coffins under the porte-cochère, and, consequently, two funeral processions, — that of Cibot, the defunct concierge, and that of Pons. No one appeared to pay a tribute of affection to the handsome catafalque of the friend of art, but all the door-keepers of the neighborhood flocked to sprinkle the mortal remains of their comrade with holy water. This contrast between the crowd assembled to do honor to Cibot and the solitude around the coffin of Pons, was noticeable not only in the house and the porte-cochère, but also in the street, where no one followed Pons

except Schmucke, who was supported by an undertaker's assistant, for he came near fainting at every step. From the rue de Normandie to the rue d'Orléans, where the church of Saint-François stands, the processions passed between two hedges of curious spectators; for, as we have already said, everything is an event in that quiet quarter of Paris. People remarked upon the splendor of the white hearse (from which hung an escutcheon with a large P embroidered upon it), and the singular fact that only one man followed it, while the simple coffin of the cheapest class of funeral was accompanied by an immense crowd. Schmucke was fortunately so bewildered by the heads at the windows, and the hedges of gaping people through which he passed, that he heard nothing, and only saw the concourse through a veil of tears.

"Ah! it's a Nut-cracker," said one, "the musician; don't you know?"

"Who are those pall-bearers?"

"Bah! only actors!"

"Look! Here comes the procession of poor Père Cibot! Eh! there's a hard-worker gone; what a drudge he was, to be sure!"

"He was always at home, that man!"

"He never took a holiday!"

"How he did love his wife!"

"Poor woman!"

Rémonencq was following his victim's coffin, and receiving condolences on the loss of his neighbor.

The two processions arrived at the church, where Cantinet had arranged with the verger that none of the beggars should speak to Schmucke. Villemot had

promised the heir that he should be left in peace, and he kept his word by watching over him and paying all the minor charges. The humble funeral of Cibot, followed by sixty to eighty persons, was escorted by the whole concourse to the cemetery. When the funeral of Pons left the church, four mourning-coaches were in waiting, — one for the clergy, the three others for the relations ; only one, however, was required, for the runner had departed during the service to apprise Monsieur Sonet of the approaching procession, in order that he might be on hand to present the design and the estimate for the monument as soon as the legatee left the grave. Fraisier, Villemot, Schmucke, and Topinard occupied the first coach, and the two other coaches, instead of returning to their establishment, went empty to Père-Lachaise. This needless trip of empty carriages often occurs. When deceased persons have no celebrity, and therefore attract few mourners, there are always too many carriages. Dead men need to have been beloved when living to be followed to the grave in Paris, where everybody wants to find a twenty-fifth hour among the twenty-four. But the drivers of the funeral coaches would lose their drink-money if they failed to make their appearance ; and so the carriages go, full or empty, to the church and to the cemetery, and return to the house of death, where the coachmen ask for their gratuities. We little imagine how many persons thrive on a death. The lower clergy, the poor of the church, the undertakers' men, the drivers of the coaches, the grave-diggers, all such spongy natures, swell out after a funeral.

From the church, where the heir was assailed, as he left it, by a flock of paupers, who were immediately

repressed by the verger, to the grave in Père-Lachaise, poor Schmucke went as criminals go from the Palais-de-Justice to the place de Grève. He was conducting, as it were, his own funeral, holding by the hand the jack-of-all-work, Topinard, the sole being who had felt in his heart a real regret for the death of Pons. Topinard, extremely touched by the honor of being made a pall-bearer, and pleased at driving in a carriage and possessing a pair of white gloves, began to feel that Pons's funeral was one of the greatest events of his life. Sunken in grief, sustained only by contact with a hand that represented a heart, Schmucke let himself be rolled along like those miserable calves which we see carried in carts to the slaughter-house. On the forward seat of the carriage sat Fraisier and Villemot. Everybody who has had the misfortune to accompany friends and relations to their last resting-place is aware that all hypocrisy is laid aside in the funeral coaches on the road, often very long, between the church and the eastern cemetery, — that particular Parisian cemetery where all vanities, all luxuries, and all sumptuous monuments seem to have mustered. The non-afflicted people begin the conversation, and the most afflicted end by listening to, and then sharing it.

"Monsieur de Marville had started for the Palais," said Fraisier to Villemot, "and I did not think it worth while to drag him from the court-room; he would have got here too late, in any case. As he is the natural and legal heir, though disinherited in favor of Monsieur Schmucke, I thought it sufficient if I were present myself, as his proxy."

Topinard began to listen.

"Who is that queer fellow who made the fourth pall-bearer?" said Fraisier to Villemot.

"He 's the agent for a firm that puts up monuments and tombstones, and he wants to get an order for a tomb, on which he proposes to carve three marble figures, Music, Painting, and Sculpture, weeping over the deceased."

"That 's quite an idea," returned Fraisier; "the old man deserves something of the kind. But such a monument would cost at least from seven to eight thousand francs."

"Oh! at least."

"If Monsieur Schmucke gives the order, they can't recover payment out of the property, for, if so, it might be eaten up in such expenses."

"They 'll bring a suit, and win it."

"Well, that will be Schmucke's affair. It would be a good trick to play those fellows," said Fraisier in a low voice; "for when the will is broken, and I 'll answer for that, — or if there should be no will at all, — how are they to get their money?"

Villemot laughed slyly. The man of law and the head-clerk spoke in whispers or in low tones; but despite the noise of the wheels and other hindrances, Topinard, accustomed to guess at meanings in the green-room, discovered that the two lawyers were plotting to drive the poor German to the wall, and he finally heard a significant mention of Clichy, the debtors' prison. From that moment the worthy and faithful servant of the drama resolved to keep watch over the friend of Pons.

At the cemetery, where, thanks to the agent of the

Maison Sonet, Villemot had bought ten feet of ground from the administration, announcing that a fine monument would be erected on it, Schmucke was led by the master of ceremonies through a crowd of idlers to the grave, into which the body was about to be lowered. But when he saw the square hole, over which four men were holding the coffin of Pons, suspended by ropes, while the priest was saying the last prayer, Schmucke's heart died within him, and he fainted away.

XXIX.

IN WHICH WE SEE THAT WHAT IS CALLED COMING INTO POSSESSION OF PROPERTY MAY MEAN DISPOSSESSION.

Topinard, assisted by the agent of the house of Sonet and by Monsieur Sonet himself, carried poor Schmucke to the establishment of the marble-cutter, where the kindest and most generous attentions were showered on him by Madame Sonet and Madame Vitelot, wife of Monsieur Sonet's partner.

In about an hour — that is, at half-past two — the poor innocent German recovered his senses. He fancied that he had been dreaming for two days, and thought he should wake up and find Pons living. So many damp cloths were on his head, and the people about him were putting so much salts and vinegar to his nose, that he opened his eyes. Madame Sonet forced him to drink some good strong broth, for the *pot-au-feu* was simmering at the monumental establishment.

"We don't often meet with customers who show such deep feeling," remarked Madame Sonet; "though we do see them, now and then, in a king's reign."

At last Schmucke spoke of returning to the rue de Normandie.

"Monsieur," said Sonet, "here is the design which my partner Vitelot made expressly for you; he sat up all night to do it. He was truly inspired; it will be a fine thing."

"One of the finest things in Père-Lachaise," said little Madame Sonet. "You are right to honor the memory of a friend who has left you his whole fortune."

This tombstone, "designed expressly" for Pons, had originally been prepared for de Marsay, the famous minister; but his widow preferred to intrust his monument to Stidmann, and the design of the marble-cutters had found no sale, for people in general have a horror of ready-made monuments. The three figures originally represented the days in July when that great minister distinguished himself. Since then Sonet and Vitelot had turned the three "glorieuses,"[1] with certain modifications, into Army, Finance, and Family, as a suitable monument for Charles Keller; but his heirs also preferred to have one executed by Stidmann. For the last eleven years the design had been adapted to every possible family circumstance, and on this occasion Vitelot had transformed the three figures into Music, Painting, and Sculpture.

"The cost is really nothing, when we consider the details and the masonry, which will take six months," said Vitelot. "Monsieur, here is the estimate, and the contract, — seven thousand francs; of course not including the quarrying — "

"If monsieur wishes marble," said Sonet, who was more particularly a marble-cutter, "it will cost twelve thousand, and monsieur will immortalize himself as well as his friend."

"I have just heard that the will is to be contested," whispered Topinard to Vitelot, "and that the heirs are

[1] Les Glorieuses: popular name for the three days' Revolution of 1830, which were called "glorieuses" in the official language of the time. — TR.

certain to recover the property; you had better go and see Monsieur Camusot de Marville, for this poor innocent won't have a penny."

"You are always bringing us customers like that!" said Madame Vitelot angrily to the runner, beginning a dispute.

Topinard took Schmucke back to the rue de Normandie on foot, for the carriages had already returned there.

"Toan'd leaf me!" said Schmucke to Topinard.

Topinard wished to go away after consigning Schmucke to the hands of Madame Sauvage.

"It is four o'clock, my dear Monsieur Schmucke, and I must go and get my dinner; my wife, who is a box-opener, won't know what has become of me. You know the theatre opens at a quarter to six."

"Yez, I know; pud joost dink! I am aloan in de vorld, I haf no frent. You, who lofed Bons and mourned for heems, inzdrugd me, dell me vat I moost do; my mindt ees targ as naight, and Bons delled me I vas zurrountet mit zgountrels."

"I saw that myself," said Topinard, "and I've prevented them from putting you to bed in Clichy."

"Gligy?" cried Schmucke; "I toan'd unterztant."

"Poor man! well, don't be troubled; I'll come and see you again; good-bye."

"Atieu; redurn zoon," said Schmucke, dropping down, almost dead with weariness.

"Adieu, monsieur!" said Madame Sauvage to Topinard in a tone that struck that dramatic observer as peculiar.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" he said, joking; "you stand there like the traitor in a melodrama!"

"Traitor yourself! What are you poking your nose into? Don't you go and meddle with monsieur's affairs and play him false."

"Play him false, scullion!" replied Topinard scornfully. "I am only a poor worker at a theatre; but I belong to artists, and I'd have you know I ask nothing from any one. Did I ask you for anything? What have I to do with you, hey, old woman?"

"You belong to the theatre, do you? Pray what's your name?" said the virago.

"Topinard, at your service."

"That's all I want to know. My compliments to médème your wife, if monsieur is married —"

"Why, what's the matter, my dear?" said Madame Cantinet, who came in just at this moment.

"This is the matter, — that you are going to stay here and look after Monsieur Schmucke, and I'm going to kick that fellow downstairs —"

"He's downstairs already; I hear him talking with that poor Madame Cibot, who is shedding all the tears in her body," said Madame Cantinet.

The Sauvage rushed down the stairway with such rapidity that the stairs shook under her feet.

"Monsieur!" she said to Fraisier, drawing him a few steps away from Madame Cibot.

She pointed to Topinard at the moment when that worthy man was departing, proud of having paid his debt to his benefactor by hindering, with a craft worthy of the side-scenes (where every one is more or less roguish), the friend of Pons from falling into a trap. Moreover, he resolved to protect the pianist of his orchestra against all the snares that might be set for him.

"Do you see that little wretch?" said the Sauvage to Fraisier. "He has been poking his nose into Monsieur Schmucke's affairs."

"Who is he?" asked Fraisier.

"Oh! a nobody."

"There is no such thing as a nobody in business."

"Well," she said, "he is a man belonging to Monsieur Schmucke's theatre, named Topinard."

"Very good, Madame Sauvage. Go on as you are doing now, and you shall have your tobacco license." And Fraisier went back to his conversation with Madame Cibot.

"As I was saying, my dear client, you have not played fair with us, and we are not bound to keep terms with an associate who deceives us."

"How have I deceived you?" said the Cibot, putting her hands on her hips. "Do you think you can frighten me with your sour looks and your snaky ways? You are only hunting for bad reasons to break your promises. And you call yourself an honest man! Do you know what you are? You 're the scum of the earth! Ha! the cap fits, does it? Put that in your pipe, and smoke it!"

"Don't get angry, my dear," said Fraisier. "Listen to me. You have made your private haul. This morning, while waiting upstairs for the funeral to start, I found this catalogue, in duplicate, written throughout in Monsieur Pons's own hand, and my eyes chanced to fall upon this item."

He opened the manuscript catalogue, and read as follows: —

"No. 7. Magnificent portrait, painted on marble by Sebastian del Piombo in 1546; sold by a family who took it from the cathedral of Terni. This portrait (which formerly had a companion portrait of a bishop, which was bought by an Englishman) represents a Knight of Malta in prayer, and was placed over the tomb of the Rossi family. If it were not for the date, this picture might be attributed to Raphael. It seems to me superior to the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli in the Musée, which is a little injured; whereas this Knight of Malta has a freshness of color due to the preservation of painting on *lavagna* (slate)."

"When I looked," resumed Fraisier, "at the place of No. 7 I saw there the portrait of a lady, signed Chardin, and no No. 7 at all! While the master of ceremonies was completing the number of his pall-bearers, I verified all the pictures, and I found eight substitutions of common pictures, without numbers, for works named as celebrities by the late Monsieur Pons, which are no longer in the collection. There is also missing a little picture on wood by Metzu, which is designated as a masterpiece."

"Was I the keeper of the pictures?" demanded the Cibot.

"No, but you were the confidential housekeeper, and attended to all Monsieur Pons's affairs; and if there has been a robbery —"

"Robbery! You will please understand, monsieur, once for all, that the pictures were sold by Monsieur Schmucke, under the orders of Monsieur Pons, to meet their expenses."

"Sold to whom?"

"Messieurs Élie Magus and Rémonencq,"

"For how much?"

"I don't recollect."

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot. You have lined your pockets pretty well, and they are full," resumed Fraisier. "I 've got my eye on you; you are in my power. Serve me well, and I will be silent! In any case, you will please understand that you are to receive nothing from Monsieur de Marville, inasmuch as you have thought proper to rob him."

"I knew very well, my dear Monsieur Fraisier, that I should be left out in the cold," answered the Cibot, softened by the promise of silence.

"Look here!" said Rémonencq, who now showed himself, "are you picking a quarrel with madame? That is n't fair! The sale of the pictures was made on a mutual agreement among Monsieur Pons, Monsieur Magus, and myself; it was three days before the deceased would come to an agreement, for he actually dreamed of those pictures. We have the receipts all in order; and if we gave, as we did, a few forty-franc pieces to madame, she only got what it is the custom to give in all the middle-class houses where we conclude a bargain. My good monsieur, if you are trying to cheat a defenceless woman, you 've come to the wrong shop. Do you hear me, trickster and sharper that you are? Monsieur Magus is master of the whole affair. And if you don't draw it gently with madame here, and if you don't pay her what you promised, I will go to the sale of the collection; and you 'll see what you 'll lose if you have Monsieur Magus and me against you. We could stir up the dealers; and instead of getting eight hundred thousand francs, you would not get two hundred thousand."

"Very good, very good; we'll see about that!" said Fraisier. "We won't sell at all, or we will sell in London."

"We know London!" cried Rémonencq. "Monsieur Magus is as powerful in London as he is in Paris."

"Adieu, madame; I'll pluck your feathers," said Fraisier to Madame Cibot, "unless you obey me — always," he added.

"You little sharper!" she screamed.

"Take care!" said Fraisier; "I'm to be *juge-de-paix*."

They parted with menaces which were well understood on both sides.

"Thank you, Rémonencq," said the Cibot; "it's a good thing for a poor widow to find a protector."

That evening, about ten o'clock, Gaudissard sent for Topinard to come to his private room at the theatre. Gaudissard, standing before the fireplace, took the Napoleonic attitude he was fond of assuming now that he directed a whole world of actors, dancers, musicians, and machinists, and negotiated treaties with authors. He habitually slipped his right hand into his waistcoat and grasped his left suspender, holding his head at a three-quarter profile and casting his glance into the void.

"Ha! Topinard, have you property to live upon?"

"No, monsieur."

"Are you looking out for some place that's better than the one you are in?"

"No, monsieur," answered the hireling, turning pale.

"What the devil do you want, then? Your wife is box-opener on the first tier, — I let her keep that position out of respect for my predecessor; I gave you the job of cleaning the lamps of the side-scenes during the day; you have charge of the orchestra and the scores at night. And that's not all! you get twenty sous extra pay for all the goblins, and for marshalling the devils when there 's a hell. It is a place every man in your position ought to covet, — and it is coveted, my good friend, in this theatre, where you have got enemies — "

"Enemies!" cried Topinard.

"You have three children, and the eldest plays the juvenile parts at fifty centimes — "

"Monsieur!"

"Let me speak!" said Gaudissard in a thundering voice. "In such a position as that, you wish to quit the theatre — "

"Monsieur!"

"You choose to meddle with other people's business, and stick your finger into wills and legacies! But, you fool, you 'll be crushed like an egg! I have his Excellency Monseigneur le Comte Popinot for my protector, a man of intelligence and high character, whom the King in his wisdom has called to a place in the Council. This statesman, this high political power, — I speak of Comte Popinot, — has married his son to the daughter of Monsieur Camusot de Marville, one of our most important and most respected judges, the chief luminary of the law at the Palais. You know the Palais de Justice? Well, this judge is the heir of his Cousin Pons, the late leader of our orchestra, to whose funeral

you went this morning. I don't blame you for paying the last duties to that poor man. But you won't keep your place here if you go and meddle in the affairs of the worthy Monsieur Schmucke, to whom I wish well, but who will find himself in hot water with the family of Pons. Now, as this German is nothing at all to me, and as Comte Popinot and Monsieur de Marville are a great deal to me, I advise you to let the excellent Monsieur Schmucke disentangle his own affairs. There 's a special God for Germans, and you 'd make a very poor sub-God. Take my advice, and stay what you are; you can't do better."

"Enough, monsieur le directeur!" said Topinard, nearly heart-broken.

Schmucke, who expected all the next day to see Topinard, the only being who had shed a tear for Pons, thus lost the protector whom chance had seemed to bestow upon him. The poor German woke on the morrow to a sense of his great loss as he gazed on the empty appartement. During the preceding days, the events and the bustle attending death had produced around him the excitement and stir which insensibly distract the eye. But the silence that follows the departure of a friend, a father, a son, a beloved wife to the tomb, the cold and dreary silence of the morrow, is terrible, it is glacial. Led by an irresistible influence into the chamber of his friend, the poor man could not endure its aspect; he drew back and returned to the dining-room, where Madame Sauvage was serving breakfast. He sat down, but could not eat. Suddenly the bell rang rather loudly, and three men in black appeared, for whom Madame Cantinet and Madame

Sauvage made way. The first was Monsieur Vitel, *juge-de-paix;* the second, his clerk; while Fraisier brought up the rear, more harsh and bitter than ever, having just encountered the disappointment of hearing that there was another will, legally drawn, which annulled the first document, the powerful weapon he had so audaciously stolen.

"We have come, monsieur," said the *juge-de-paix* to Schmucke, gently, "to affix the seals."

Schmucke, to whom these words were Greek, gazed at the three men with a frightened air.

"We have come at the request of Monsieur Fraisier, barrister, the proxy of Monsieur Camusot de Marville, the heir of his cousin, the late Sieur Pons," added the clerk.

"The collection is there, in that large salon, and in the bedroom of the deceased," said Fraisier.

"Very good; then we will pass on. Excuse us, monsieur; go on with your breakfast," said the justice.

The invasion of the three men in black had stiffened Schmucke with terror.

"This gentleman," said Fraisier, fixing on Schmucke one of those venomous glances with which he magnetized his victim just as a spider magnetizes a fly, "this gentleman, who has contrived to get a will made in his favor before a notary, must expect to meet with opposition from the rightful heirs. No family will permit a stranger to rob them without making resistance; and we shall see, monsieur, which will carry the day, — fraud and corruption, or family ties. We have the right, as the legitimate heirs, to demand that the seals be affixed. I shall watch that this protective act be performed with the utmost rigor; and it will be."

"Mein Gott! mein Gott! vat grime haf I gommidded accainst heffen?" said the innocent Schmucke.

"There's a deal of talk about you in the house," said the Sauvage. "While you were asleep a little fellow dressed all in black, a mere puppy, the head-clerk of Monsieur Hannequin, was here. He insisted on seeing you; but as you were sleeping, and worn out after the ceremonies of yesterday, I told him you had given a power of attorney to Monsieur Villemot, the head-clerk of Monsieur Tabareau, and that if he had come on business he had better go and see him. 'Ah! very good,' he said; 'I can come to an understanding with him: we are going to deposit the will, after showing it to the president.' So I asked him to send Monsieur Villemot here as soon as he could. Don't be anxious, monsieur," she added, "you have plenty of people to defend your rights. They can't shear the wool from your back. You've got somebody behind you with claws and teeth. Monsieur Villemot will send 'em to the right-about. As for me, I have been in such a passion with that horrid Ma'ame Cibot, who presumes to judge her masters! She declares you've filched the property from the heirs, and that you locked up Monsieur Pons and made a tool of him; she says he was out of his mind. But I avenged you on her finely, the wretch! 'You're a thief and a low deceiver!' I said to her, 'and you'll be sent to the assizes for the things you've stolen from your gentleman,' — that stopped her mouth, I can tell you."

"Does monsieur wish to be present when the seals are affixed in the bedroom of the deceased?" said the clerk, coming back to fetch Schmucke.

"No, no!" said Schmucke; "led me aloan, led me tie in beace!"

"People have the right to die as they like," said the clerk, laughing, "and our chief business is with the property they leave behind them; but we seldom see the heir of all following the testator to the grave, and dying with him!"

"I am tying mit heems," said Schmucke, who felt, after so many blows, an intolerable anguish in his heart.

"Ah! here comes Monsieur Villemot," cried the Sauvage.

"Monsir Fillemod," said the poor German, "bleaze to rebrezend me."

"Instantly," said the head-clerk; "I came to tell you that the will is all in order, and will certainly be admitted by the court, which will put you at once into possession. You will have a fine property."

"Broberdy! I—" cried Schmucke, in despair at being thought to care for it.

"Meantime," said the Sauvage, "what's that *juge-de-paix* doing in there, with his candles and his little bits of wire ribbon?"

"Ah! he is affixing the seals. Come, Monsieur Schmucke, you have the right to be present."

"No; bleaze go yourzelv."

"But why does he put on the seals, if monsieur is in his own home and the property belongs to him?" demanded the Sauvage, making the law for herself, like all women, who interpret the Code to suit their fancy.

"Monsieur is not in his own home, but in that of Monsieur Pons," said Villemot. "It will all belong to

him, no doubt; but a legatee can take the property only by what we call 'a mandate of possession,' and that is issued by the court. If the dispossessed legal heirs contest the mandate, then a suit is brought; and as it is doubtful what decision may be rendered, seals are affixed to the property, and the notaries of the heirs and of the legatee proceed to make the inventory during the delay required by law. That 's how it is."

Hearing this legal jargon for the first time in his life, Schmucke's head completely gave way; it felt too heavy to hold up any longer, and he let it fall upon the back of the arm-chair in which he was sitting. Villemot went to talk with the justice and his clerk, and assist, with the coolness of a practised hand, in affixing the seals, — which, if the heirs are not present, is seldom accomplished without a few jests and observations on the articles that are thus fastened up until the time comes for their distribution. At last the four lawyers closed the salon and returned to the dining-room, where the clerk continued his work. Schmucke mechanically watched the operation, which consists in sealing with the official seal of the *juge-de-paix* a wire ribbon to each leaf of the door, if it is a folding-door, or from the door-panels to the wall-partitions when the single doors of the rooms and closets are to be closed.

"Let us go into this room," said Fraisier, pointing to Schmucke's bedroom.

"But that 's monsieur's own room," said the Sauvage, springing forward, and putting herself between the lawyers and the door.

"Here is the lease of the appartement," said the odious Fraisier; "we found it among the papers. It

is not made out in the name of Pons and Schmucke, it is in the name of Monsieur Pons only. This appartement is part of the property; and besides—" He added, opening the door of Schmucke's room, "See, monsieur le juge, it is full of pictures."

"So it is," said the *juge-de-paix*, giving in to Fraisier at once.

XXX.

THE FRUITS OF FRAISIER.

"STOP a moment, gentlemen," cried Villemot. "Do you think that you are going to turn the legatee out of doors when his rights are nothing more than contested?"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Fraisier; "we forbid the delivery of the legacy."

"Under what pretext?"

"You 'll soon know all about it, my little man!" said Fraisier, jeeringly. "At this stage of the proceedings we won't prevent the legatee from withdrawing all articles personally belonging to him in this chamber, but the room will then be sealed up. Monsieur can go and lodge where he likes."

"No," said Villemot; "monsieur will stay in his own room!"

"How will you manage it?"

"I will make application before the court and bring proof that he is part-tenant of this appartement, and that you cannot turn him out. Take away the pictures and decide on what belonged to the deceased and what belongs to my client, if you like; but my client will stay here, my little man!" cried Villemot.

"I vill leaf!" said Schmucke, whose energy came back to him as he listened to the horrible dispute.

"You had better," said Fraisier; "you will escape

costs, for you could n't win a suit. The lease to Monsieur Pons is formally made out."

"The lease! the lease!" cried Villemot; "it is a matter of equity and good faith."

"You can't prove it, as in criminal cases, by testimony. Are you going to rush into questions of tenure, and get interlocutory judgments, and bring a suit?" said Fraisier.

"No, no!" cried Schmucke, terrified; "I gif ub; I vill moof oud; I vill leaf de house."

Schmucke's life was that of a philosopher, cynical without knowing it, reduced as it was to its simplest expression. He possessed only two pairs of shoes, one pair of boots, two complete suits of clothes, twelve shirts, twelve silk handkerchiefs, twelve pocket-handkerchiefs, four waistcoats, and a superb pipe, which Pons had given him, with an embroidered tobacco-pouch. Roused to action by a fever of indignation, he went into his room, gathered up his belongings, and laid them on a chair.

"All dat ees mine," he said, with a simplicity worthy of Cincinnatus; "de biano ees alzo mine."

"Madame," said Fraisier to the Sauvage, "get some man to help you, and put these things and the piano out on the landing."

"You are too harsh," said Villemot to Fraisier. "The *juge-de-paix* is the one to give such orders; he is master of this affair."

"There is property there," said the clerk, pointing to the bedroom.

"And, moreover," observed the justice, "monsieur leaves of his own free-will."

"Did I ever see such a client!" exclaimed Villemot, turning on Schmucke indignantly; "you are as limp as a rag!"

"Vat gan it madder vare I tie?" said Schmucke, turning to go. "Dese men, dey loog ad me laike di-gars. I vill zent for my boor dings," he added.

"Where is monsieur going?"

"Var-effer it bleazes Gott," said the heir of all, with a gesture of profound indifference.

"Let me know where," said Villemot.

"Follow him," whispered Fraisier to the head-clerk.

Madame Cantinet was appointed guardian of the seals and of the moneys found on the premises, receiving an allowance of fifty francs.

"It is all going right," said Fraisier to Vitel, the *juge-de-paix,* when Schmucke had departed. "If you intend to resign your position in my favor, go and see Madame de Marville, and come to an understanding with her."

"That man is made of butter!" said Vitel, pointing to Schmucke, who was standing in the court-yard, looking up for the last time at the windows of the appartement.

"Yes, he can't resist!" said Fraisier. "You may safely marry your little daughter to Poulain; the doctor is to be surgeon-in-chief of the Quinze-Vingts."

"We 'll see about it. Adieu, Monsieur Fraisier!" said the *juge-de-paix* in a tone of fellowship.

"That 's a man of resources," said the justice's clerk; "he 'll go far, that cur!"

It was now eleven o'clock; the old German went his way, mechanically following the streets he was wont to take with Pons, thinking ceaselessly of his friend,

and fancying he was at his side. As he reached the theatre, Topinard, who had just cleaned all the lamps of the side-scenes, was coming away, with his mind full of the director's tyranny.

"Ah! here ees joost vat I vant!" cried Schmucke, stopping him. "Dobinard, haf you a blace to lif in?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"A houzeholt vare you ead?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Gan you dake me to poard? I vill bay you vell; I boz-ess nine hundert vrancs a-year. I haf nod long to lif. I shall pe no druppel, I ead zo liddel; mein only lugzury ees to zmoak my bibe. You aloan haf creeft for Pons, und zo I lof you!"

"Monsieur, I would take you with much pleasure; but you must know that Monsieur Gaudissard has been wigging me —"

"Vig-gin?"

"Well, I mean combed my hair —"

"Goamt your hair?"

"He scolded me for taking an interest in you; and if you come to live with me we must be very discreet. Even if you do come, I don't believe you 'll stay long; you don't know what the home of a poor devil like me is."

"I breffare de boor home of a goot heart dat lofed Bons, pedder dann de Duileries mit men laike di-gars. I haf lefd di-gars in Bons's abbardemend who vill tefower all."

"Come with me, monsieur," said Topinard, "and you shall see just how it is. But — stay, there is a loft! We will consult Madame Topinard."

Schmucke followed Topinard like a sheep as he led him into one of those horrible localities which may be called the cancers of Paris. The place is named the *cité*-Bordin. It is a narrow passage, flanked with houses built as they build houses on speculation, and it opens from the rue de Bondy near that part of the street which is overshadowed by the immense building of the theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin, one of the warts of Paris. This passage, whose road-bed is sunk below the level of the street pavement, shelves down in the direction of the rue des Mathurin-des-Temples. The *cité* ends with a transversal street that bars it at one end, in the form of a T. These two lanes, standing thus at right angles, contain about thirty houses of six or seven stories each, whose various tenements and inner courtyards are crowded with warerooms, small manufactories, and industries of every sort. It is the faubourg Saint-Antoine in miniature. Here they make furniture, engrave brass, sew costumes for the theatre, blow and cut glass, paint porcelains, and manufacture all the novelties and varieties of the commodity called the *article-Paris*. Dirty and productive as commerce itself, this passage, swarming with human beings coming and going, and with hand-carts and drays, is repulsive in aspect, and the population which hives there is in keeping with the products and the premises. They are people of small trades and manufactures; intelligent in manual labor, but their intelligence is all absorbed in it. Topinard lived in this *cité* — flourishing by reason of its industries — because the rents were low. He occupied the second house to the left of the entrance. His appartement, on the sixth floor, had a view of a zone of

gardens which are still to be seen, and belong to the three or four fine mansions in the rue de Bondy.

Topinard's tenement included only a kitchen and two chambers. The first chamber belonged to the children, and contained two little white wooden bedsteads and a cradle; the second was the bedroom of the father and mother. The family took their meals in the kitchen. Above was a half-story, or loft, about six feet in height, with a zinc roof, lighted from above. It was reached by a stairway of white wood, called in builders' jargon "a miller's ladder." This room, intended for a servant, enabled the owner of the house to call the Topinards' lodging a complete appartement, and to charge four hundred francs a-year for it. At the entrance, to mask the kitchen, was a thin partition, or screen (lighted by a circular window opening into the kitchen), in which were three doors. The rooms were all floored with brick, painted wood-color in a vulgar style, and filled with the belongings of a family of five, three of whom were children. The walls showed deep scratches made by the children as high up as their arms could reach. Well-to-do people can hardly imagine the paucity of the kitchen utensils, which consisted of one Dutch oven, one kettle, one gridiron, one saucepan, two or three coffee-pots, and a frying-pan. The plates and dishes, of brown and white earthenware, were worth about twelve francs. The table did the double duty of kitchen-table and dining-table; and the rest of the furniture comprised only two chairs and two stools. The space under the oven was filled with a provision of wood and coal. In a corner stood a tub, in which the family washing was frequently

done during the night. The room occupied by the children had clothes-lines stretched across it, and it was papered with a medley of theatrical posters and engravings cut from newspapers or from the prospectuses of illustrated books. The eldest hope of the Topinards, whose school-books lay in a corner of the room, was evidently intrusted with the care of the household when the father and mother departed, at six o'clock in the evening, for their service at the theatre. In many poor families, as soon as a child is six or seven years old, he plays the part of a mother to his younger brothers and sisters.

This slight sketch will serve to show that the Topinards were, in popular phrase, poor but honest. Topinard was about forty years of age, and his wife, a former leader of the chorus (the mistress, it was said, of the bankrupt director who had preceded Gaudissard), was thirty. Lolotte had been a beauty; but the misfortunes of the late administration had reacted upon her so far as to oblige her to contract a "theatre marriage" with Topinard. She never doubted that when they were a hundred and fifty francs ahead of the world, Topinard would redeem his promises and marry her legally, if only to legitimize the children, whom he adored. In the mornings, during her leisure moments, Madame Topinard sewed for the property-room of the theatre. This indefatigable pair earned by incessant labor about nine hundred francs a-year between them.

"Another flight!" Topinard had remarked, from the third floor up, to Schmucke, who was so absorbed in his misery as not to know whether he was going up or down.

At the moment when the former, dressed in white linen, like all the persons employed about a theatre, opened the door of the kitchen, the voice of Madame Topinard was heard calling out, —

"Come, children, be quiet; here's papa!"

As the children evidently did what they liked with papa, the eldest, mounted on a broomstick, continued to lead a charge of cavalry, in remembrance of the Cirque-Olympique, the second to toot on a tin fife, while the third brought up the rear as the rank and file of the army. The mother was sewing on a theatrical costume.

"Be quiet!" cried Topinard in a formidable voice, "or I'll thrash you — Always have to say that, you know," he added in a whisper to Schmucke. "Here, my girl," he said to Madame Topinard, "here's Monsieur Schmucke, the friend of that poor Monsieur Pons; he does not know where to go, and so he wants to come to us. It's in vain that I tell him we are not gorgeous, that we live on the sixth floor, and have nothing but a loft to give him; he insists on coming —"

Schmucke had seated himself on a chair which Madame Topinard placed for him, and the children, silenced by the arrival of a stranger, were huddled together in a group, devoting themselves to that profoundly critical, mute, and quickly finished examination which distinguishes childhood, accustomed, like dogs, to scent things rather than judge of them. Schmucke took notice of the pretty group, in which was a little girl about five years old, the one who blew the fife and had magnificent blond hair.

"She ees laike a liddel Chermann!" said Schmucke, making her a sign to come to him.

"Monsieur will be very uncomfortable in the loft," said the mother; "if I were not obliged to have my children near me, I would ask him to take our room."

She opened the door of the chamber as she spoke, and showed it to Schmucke. The whole luxury of the appartement was concentrated there. The mahogany bedstead was draped with curtains of blue calico, edged with white fringe. The same blue calico, in the form of curtains, decorated the window. The bureau, the secretary, and the chairs, also of mahogany, were all well cared for. On the mantelshelf was a clock and some candlesticks, — doubtless the gift of the bankrupt, whose portrait, a hideous painting by Pierre Grassou, hung above the bureau. The children, to whom all entrance into these sacred precincts was forbidden, cast inquisitive glances across the threshold.

"Monsieur would be comfortable there," said Madame Topinard.

"No, no," answered Schmucke. "I haf nod long to lif; I only neet a gorner in vich to tie."

Madame Topinard shut the chamber-door, and led the way to the loft. As soon as Schmucke saw it he cried,—

"Dis ees joost raight! Pefore I lift mit Bons, I vas nefare pedder houzed dan dis."

"Well, then," said Topinard, "we shall only have to buy a cot-bed, two mattresses, a bolster, a pillow, two chairs, and a table, including wash-basin and things, and a little bed-side carpet. Fifty crowns will do it all; and that is n't the death of a man!"

It was all arranged; but the fifty crowns seemed to be lacking, and Schmucke, who was within two steps of the theatre, naturally thought, when he saw the poverty of his new friends, of asking the director for his salary. He went at once to the theatre and found Gaudissard. That magnate received him with the rather stiff civility he assumed towards artists, and was astonished at Schmucke's request for a month's salary. Nevertheless, on examining the accounts, the demand was found to be a just one.

"The devil! My dear fellow," cried Gaudissard, "you Germans know how to keep accounts, even in the depths of affliction! I thought you'd be grateful for the gift of that thousand francs — a whole year's salary — which I sent you, and for which you ought to have given me a receipt."

"Ve nefare reziefed id," said Schmucke. "Und eef I now goam to you, it ees begauze I am triffen indo de zdreeds mit-oud a benny. Py whom tid you zend de money?"

"By your housekeeper."

"Matame Zipod!" cried the pianist. "She gilled Bons! she roppt heems, she zolt his broberdy, she dried to purn his vill! She ees a hoozy — a monzder!"

"But, my dear fellow, how is it you have n't a penny, and are turned into the streets without a home, when the whole property was left to you? It is n't logical, as we say."

"Dey durned me oud of toors. I am a zdrancher; I know noding of de laws."

"Poor man!" thought Gaudissard, seeing in his mind's eye the probable end of the unequal struggle.

"Listen to me," he said aloud. "Do you know what you ought to do?"

"I haf a peazenez achent."

"Well, then, negotiate at once with the heirs. They will pay you a sum down and give you an annuity; and then you can live in peace."

"Beace — dat ees all I vant," said Schmucke.

"Very good! then let me arrange it for you," said Gaudissard, to whom Fraisier had revealed his scheme the night before.

It occurred to the Illustrious Gaudissard to ingratiate himself with the young Vicomtesse Popinot and her mother by getting them out of the dirty affair, and thus forward his hopes of being councillor of state at some future day.

"I audorize you to achd for me."

"So be it! Now attend. In the first place," said the Napoleon of the theatres, "here's three hundred francs." He took fifteen louis from his purse and gave them to Schmucke. "They are yours; they are six months' advance on your salary: if you leave the theatre, why, you'll pay them back to me. Now, let's make an estimate. What do you spend a year? How much do you want to make you happy? Come now! consider yourself a Sardanapalus!"

"I neet a zuit of gloaz for vinder, and anoder for zummaire."

"Three hundred francs," said Gaudissard.

"Poods, four bairs —"

"Sixty francs."

"Den bairs of zdoggins —"

"Say twelve — thirty-six francs."

"Zigs jhirds —"

"Six cotton shirts, twenty-four francs; same of linen, forty-eight: seventy-two francs. Here we are, four hundred and sixty-eight — say five hundred, counting cravats and handkerchiefs; a hundred more for washing, — six hundred francs. Now then, how much do you need to live on? three francs a day?"

"No, dad ees too mooch."

"Stay, you must have hats! Call it fifteen hundred, and five hundred for rent, — two thousand. Do you want me to get you an annuity of two thousand francs, good security?"

"Pud my dopaggo?"

"True; two thousand four hundred francs. Ha, ha! papa Schmucke, so you call it tobacco! Well, well! we'll throw in the tobacco. Then it is to be two thousand four hundred francs annuity?"

"No, dad ees nod all. I moost haf a zome town; een gash —"

"Pin-money! the old Robert Macaire! Those Germans, are not they naïve!" said Gaudissard to himself. "Well, what do you want?" he said aloud; "but remember, this must be the last item."

"It ees to bay a zagret tett."

"A debt!" thought Gaudissard; "the old scamp! Why, he is worse than an eldest son! He'll talk about notes-of-hand next! I must pull him up short, for that Fraisier can't see things on a grand scale — What sort of debt, my dear fellow? tell me."

"Der ees a mann, der only mann dad mourned for Bons mit me: he has a breddy liddel curl, mit hair dat ees magneefeezend; she zeemed to me, joost now, laike

de Cheniuz of mein own Chermanny, — vich I oughd nefare, nefare to haf quiddet; Paris ees no blace for Chermanns, dey ritigule dem here," said Schmucke, with a little gesture of the head, signifying that he was a man who saw all things clearly in this lower world.

"He is mad," thought Gaudissard.

Moved to pity for the poor innocent, the director's eyes filled with tears.

"Ha! you unterzdant me, Monsir Cautizart! Vell, dat mann, who has de breddy liddel curl, ees Dobinard, who addends in de orgezdra und laights de lambs. Bons lofed heem and dook gare ov heems; he vas de zole mann dad aggompaneet my frent — mein only frent — to de jurch, to de zimedary, to hees cra-afe! I moost haf dree douzant vrancs for heem, and dree douzant more for de liddel curl."

"Poor man!" thought Gaudissard.

The selfish parvenu was touched to the heart by such generous gratitude for a mere nothing, — nothing, as the world sees it, but to the eyes of this divine lamb it outweighed, like Bossuet's cup of water, all the victories of conquerors. Beneath his conceit and vanity, beneath a ruthless desire to force his way, and rise to the level of his old friend Popinot, Gaudissard hid a good heart and a kind nature. He at once effaced all his hasty impressions of Schmucke, and came over to his side.

"You shall have it all; I will do my very best, my dear Schmucke. Topinard is an honest man."

"Yes, I haf joost zeen heem in his boor liddel home, where he is habby und gon-dend mit his jiltren."

"I'll give him the cashier's place; old Baudrand is going to leave me."

"Ha! may Gott plez you!"

"Well, my dear good man, come to Monsieur Berthier's, the notary, at four o'clock this afternoon, and everything shall be settled; you shall be at ease for the rest of your days. You shall receive your six thousand francs, and I'll give you the same salary under Garangeot that you had under Pons."

"No," said Schmucke; "I gan nod lif. Mein heart ees proken; I am zdriggen town."

"Poor sheep!" said Gaudissard to himself as the German bowed and went away. "The world lives on cutlets; in the words of our sublime Béranger, —

"'Poor sheep! forever sheared!'"

And he sang that political sentiment to get rid of his emotion.

"Call up my carriage," he said to the attendant in the office.

Then he went down, and cried to the coachman, "Rue de Hanovre!" The man of ambition was once more uppermost; he saw himself in the Council of State.

XXXI.

CONCLUSION.

Schmucke was at that moment buying flowers, with which he returned almost joyously to the *cité*-Bordin, bringing some cakes for the children of Topinard.

"I gif you zome gakes — " he said with a smile.

It was the first smile that had come to his lips for three months, and any one seeing it would have shuddered.

"— Pud on one gondission," he added.

"You are too good, monsieur," said the mother.

"De liddel curl moost giss me, und arranche de flowers een her hair joost laike de liddel Chermann curls."

"Olga, my daughter, do just what monsieur tells you," said Madame Topinard, severely.

"Toan 'd zgolt mein liddel fräulein," cried Schmucke, who saw his own dear Germany in the little child.

"The furniture is coming up on the backs of three porters," cried Topinard, making his appearance.

"Ah!" said the German, "Dobinard, my frent, here are doo hundert vrancs to bay for eet — You haf a goot vaife here, und you moost marry her. I gif you dree dousant vrancs; und de liddel curl, she vill haf a tode of dree dousant more, vich you moost bood een der

pank een her name — Und you are to pe gachier, in blace of Pautran!"

"I! in place of Baudrand?"

"Yez."

"Who told you so?"

"Monsir Cautizart."

"I shall go mad with joy! Hey, Rosalie! sha'n't we carry our heads high at the theatre? But it is n't possible!" he added.

"Our benefactor must n't sleep in the loft," said Madame Topinard.

"It toos ferry vell for de few tays I haf to lif," said Schmucke. "It ees ferry goot. Atieu; I co to de zimedary to zee vat has peen tone mit Bons, and to lay dese flowers on his cra-afe."

Madame Camusot de Marville was a prey to anxiety. Fraisier held counsel with her, and with Godeschal and Berthier. Berthier, the notary, and Godeschal, the attorney, considered the will, made by two notaries in presence of two witnesses and drawn by Léopold Hannequin in the most precise and formal manner, as incontestable. According to the worthy Godeschal, Schmucke, even if his present counsellor managed to deceive him, would soon be enlightened, were it only by those attorneys who have recourse to acts of apparent generosity that are in reality speculations to obtain cases. The two ministerial lawyers quitted Madame de Marville, after strongly advising her to beware of Fraisier, about whose character they had now informed themselves. At this moment Fraisier himself, who had gone to the rue de Hanovre after affixing the seals in

Pons's appartement, was writing out a legal summons in the president's private room, where Madame de Marville had sent him, at the request of Godeschal and Berthier, who, thinking the transaction too foul for a judge to be mixed up in, wished to express that opinion to Madame de Marville without being heard by Fraisier.

"Well, madame, where are those gentlemen?" said Fraisier, returning.

"Gone; advising me to give up the affair," answered Madame de Marville.

"Give it up!" cried Fraisier in a tone of suppressed anger. "Listen, madame." And he read the following paper: —

"On the requisition of, etc., etc. (I omit the legal verbiage.)

"Whereas, there has been deposited in the hands of the judge of the first civil court a will drawn by Maître Léopold Hannequin and Alexandre Crottat, notaries of Paris, in presence of two witnesses, Messieurs Brunner and Schwab, foreigners domiciled in Paris, by the which will the Sieur Sylvain Pons, deceased, bequeaths his whole property to a Sieur Wilhelm Schmucke, to the prejudice of his natural and legal heir, the present complainant;

"And whereas, the complainant is able to show that the said will is the work of undue influence, and the result of stratagems which are against the law; and that eminent personages are ready to prove that it was the intention of the testator to leave his fortune to Mademoiselle Cécile, daughter of the present complainant, the Sieur de Marville, and that the will, which the said complainant now asks may be set aside, was extorted from the testator when enfeebled and out of his right mind;

"And whereas, the Sieur Schmucke, for the purpose of

obtaining this legacy, kept the testator in durance, and prevented the family from approaching his death-bed, and after obtaining the said legacy was guilty of notorious ingratitude, which scandalized the household and the neighbors, who were present to pay the last duties to the door-keeper of the house in which the testator deceased;

"And whereas, still other and more important facts, for the proofs of which the complainant is now seeking, will be laid before the court;

"Therefore, I, the undersigned, etc., etc., summon the said Sieur Schmucke to appear before the judges of the said court, and show cause why the said will, drawn by Messieurs Hannequin and Crottat, shall not be regarded as null and of no effect. And I do, moreover, protest against whatever powers and qualifications the Sieur Schmucke may assume as sole legatee, intending to oppose, and hereby opposing, by this petition presented this day before the court, the order of possession asked for by the said Sieur Schmucke, on whom a copy of this present summons has been served; of which the costs are, etc., etc."

"I know the man, madame, and when he has read that love-letter, he'll come to terms; he will consult Tabareau, and Tabareau will tell him to accept our offers. You are willing to give him an annuity of three thousand francs?"

"Certainly; I should be glad to pay the first instalment at once."

"It can all be settled in three days. This summons will startle him in the first bewilderment of his grief; for the poor man really does regret Pons; he has taken the loss seriously."

"If the summons is served, can it be withdrawn?" asked Madame de Marville.

"Certainly, madame; we can always abandon the case."

"Well, monsieur, then go on; do as you think best. Yes, the property you offer me is worth the risk. Besides, I have arranged with Vitel, who will send in his resignation; but you must pay the sixty thousand francs I have promised him out of the proceeds of the Pons estate. And so, you see, we positively must succeed."

"You have Vitel's resignation in hand?"

"Yes, monsieur; Monsieur Vitel has perfect confidence in Monsieur de Marville."

"Well, madame, I have already saved you sixty thousand francs which we calculated to give to that vile creature Madame Cibot. But I must insist upon the tobacco-license for Madame Sauvage, and the vacant place of surgeon-in-chief of the Quinze-Vingts."

"That 's understood; it is all arranged."

"Very good; then everything is settled. Everybody is on your side in this affair, — even Gaudissard, the director of the theatre, whom I went to see yesterday, and who has promised to crush the man who warned Schmucke against us."

"Oh! I know why. Monsieur Gaudissard is devoted to the Popinots."

Fraisier left the house. Unfortunately he did not meet Gaudissard, and the fatal summons was at once despatched.

Money-loving people will understand, and honest people will execrate, Madame de Marville's joy. Twenty minutes after Fraisier had left her, Gaudissard came to report his conversation with poor Schmucke. Madame de Marville approved of every-

thing, and was also infinitely obliged to the director for making certain remarks which eased her scruples, and which she thought eminently just.

"Madame," said Gaudissard, "I have been thinking, as I came along, that this poor devil would never have known what to do with such a fortune. He's as simple as a patriarch; innocent, truly German; he ought to be kept in a glass-case like a little wax Jesus. In fact, it is my opinion that he is already embarrassed with his two-thousand-five-hundred-franc annuity; you are really inciting him to dissipation."

"It is the duty of noble hearts to benefit a man who regrets our cousin Pons," said Madame de Marville. "I greatly deplore the little misunderstanding which parted Monsieur Pons and me; if he had come back to us, all would have been forgiven: my husband really misses him. Monsieur de Marville was much distressed at receiving no notice of the death; he has a truly religious reverence for all family duties, and he would certainly have attended the funeral and been present at the cemetery. I myself should have gone to the church."

"Well, madame," said Gaudissard, "be so good as to have the deed prepared at once; I'll bring the German to Berthier's office at four o'clock. Present my respects to your charming daughter, the Vicomtesse Popinot; ask her to say to my illustrious friend, her good and excellent father, that distinguished statesman, that I am heartily devoted to him and his, and that I beg him to continue his precious favor to me. I owe my life to his uncle, the judge, and I owe my fortune to him; and I desire to obtain through you and your

daughter the respect and consideration which attach to those who hold honorable positions in life. I wish to leave the theatre and become an earnest man."

"You are that already, monsieur," said Madame de Marville.

"Adorable!" exclaimed Gaudissard, kissing her lean hand.

At four o'clock, Fraisier, the wire-puller of the whole transaction, Tabareau, holding Schmucke's power of attorney, and Schmucke himself, brought by Gaudissard, were assembled in the office of Monsieur Berthier, notary. Fraisier had taken care to put bank-notes to the amount of six thousand francs, together with six hundred francs for the first instalment of the annuity, on the notary's table under the eyes of the old German, who, amazed at the sight of so much money, paid not the slightest attention to the deed which was being read over to him. The poor soul, seized upon by Gaudissard on his way back from the cemetery, where he had been talking with Pons and promising to rejoin him soon, was not in full possession of his faculties, shaken as they were by so many shocks. He therefore did not hear the preamble of the deed, in which he was represented as assisted by Maître Tabareau, sheriff, his proxy and counsel, and in which the charges contained in Monsieur de Marville's summons in the interests of his daughter were stated. Schmucke was thus made to injure himself; for by signing the deed, he admitted the truth of Fraisier's horrible assertions. But he was so overjoyed at getting the money for the Topinard family, and so happy to enrich, according to his humble ideas, the only man who loved Pons, that he did

not hear a single word relating to the Marville suit. While the deed was being read a clerk entered the office.

"Monsieur," he said to his employer, "a man wishes to speak to Monsieur Schmucke."

The notary, at a sign from Fraisier, looked at the clerk significantly.

"We can't be disturbed when signing deeds. Ask the name of the — is he a man, or a gentleman? or a creditor?"

The clerk went away, but soon returned, saying, —

"He says he positively must speak to Monsieur Schmucke."

"His name?"

"Topinard."

"I'll go and see him. Sign the deed," said Gaudissard; "finish what you are doing. I will find out what he wants."

Gaudissard understood Fraisier, and both scented danger.

"What are you doing here?" said the director to his hireling. "Don't you want to be cashier? The first duty of a cashier is — discretion!"

"Monsieur!"

"Go about your business! You'll never be anything at all if you stick your nose into people's affairs in this way."

"Monsieur, I'll eat no bread if every crumb of it is to stick in my throat! Monsieur Schmucke!" — he called out.

Schmucke, who had signed the deed and held the money in his hand, came out on hearing Topinard's cry.

"Here ees zomeding for de liddel Chermann, and for you —" he said.

"Ah! my dear Monsieur Schmucke, you have enriched monsters; these people have robbed you of your good name. Read that; I've carried it to an honorable man, a lawyer who knows that Fraisier, and he says you ought to punish such wickedness by meeting the suit, and that would frighten them, and they would give it up."

And this imprudent friend gave Schmucke the summons, drawn up by Fraisier and approved by Madame de Marville, which had been left for the poor German at the *cité* Bordin. Schmucke took the paper and read it. The discovery of how he had been treated was his death-blow; the gravel choked his heart. Topinard caught him in his arms; they were standing under the notary's porte-cochère. A coach passed; Topinard called to the driver and got into it with the poor German, who was now suffering the agony of a congestion of the brain. His sight was dim, but he still had strength to give the money to Topinard. Schmucke did not die under the first attack, but he never recovered his reason; his movements were all unconscious; he ate nothing, and died in ten days without uttering a complaint, for he never spoke again. He was nursed by Madame Topinard, and was buried in a humble way, side by side with Pons, under the directions of Topinard, the sole person who followed the poor stranger to his grave.

Fraisier, appointed *juge-de-paix*, and very intimate in the household of Monsieur Camusot de Marville, is much appreciated by Madame de Marville, who has

not allowed him to marry "Tabareau's daughter;" she has promised something infinitely better than that to the clever man to whom she owes (according to her own sense of her obligations) not only the acquisition of the meadows around Marville and the charming cottage of the Englishman, but the political elevation of Monsieur de Marville, who became a deputy in the general election of 1846.

Every one will doubtless wish to know what has become of the heroine of this history, — a history which, unfortunately, is only too true in all its details, and which, together with its predecessor (to which it bears the relation of a younger sister),[1] proves that the grand social force is strength of character. You guess at once, O amateurs, connoisseurs, and dealers, that this heroine is none other than the collection of our poor Pons. It will suffice if we are present at a conversation which took place at the house of Comte Popinot, who, only a few days ago, was showing his magnificent collection to certain foreigners.

"Monsieur le Comte," said an Englishman of distinction, "you possess treasures!"

"Oh! my lord," said Comte Popinot, modestly, "in the matter of pictures no one, I will not say in Paris, but in Europe, can pretend to rival an obscure individual, a Jew named Élie Magus, an old picture-maniac, the chief of such fanatics. He has collected over a hundred pictures which are really enough to discourage all amateurs from attempting to collect. France will some day have to devote seven or eight millions to the

[1] Cousin Bette; another volume of The Poor Relations.

purchase of this collection when the old Jew dies. As to curiosities, my collection is certainly fine enough to deserve mention."

"How is it possible that a man so occupied as you are in public affairs, and whose original fortune was honestly won in commercial pursuits —"

"As a druggist," said Popinot, "how is it that I care for these things?"

"No," replied the foreigner, "but how have you found time to search for them? Curiosities do not come to us of themselves."

"My father," said the Vicomtesse Popinot, "always had the nucleus of a collection; he was fond of works of art and masterpieces. But the greater part of his collection came through me."

"Through you, madame? So young! Are you addicted to these vices?" said a Russian prince.

The Russians are such imitators that they reflect all the diseases of civilization. The bric-à-brac mania rages at St. Petersburg, and, as a result of the vigor natural to the Russian people, they have raised the price of what Rémonencq called "that article" so high that the work of the collector is rendered wellnigh impossible. The prince was now in Paris for the sole purpose of adding to his collection.

"Prince," said the vicomtesse, "I inherited this treasure from a cousin who loved me much, and who spent more than forty years, from 1805, in picking up these works of art in all countries, but more especially in Italy."

"What was his name?" asked the Englishman.

"Pons," said the president.

"He was a charming man," said Madame de Marville, in her fluty little voice, "full of wit, original, and with it all, he had a good heart. This fan which you admire, my lord, came from him; he gave it me one morning with a pretty little speech which you must excuse my repeating."

And she glanced at her daughter.

"Tell us the pretty little speech, madame la vicomtesse," said the Russian prince.

"The speech is worthy of the fan!" said Cécile, — to whom, indeed, it was stereotyped. "He told my mother that it was time the fan should pass from the hands of vice into those of virtue."

The English lord looked at Madame de Marville with an air of doubt that was extremely flattering to so shrivelled a woman.

"He dined with us three or four times a week," she said; "he loved us so much! We knew how to appreciate him, and artists like those who share their tastes. My husband was his only relation; and when the property came to us (Monsieur de Marville did not in the least expect it), Monsieur le Comte Popinot preferred to buy the whole collection rather than have it sold at auction. Of course we were glad to part with it in that way; it would have been extremely painful to see all these beautiful things which our dear cousin had so enjoyed, dispersed in every direction: Élie Magus appraised them. And it was thus, my lord, that I was able to buy the cottage built by your uncle, where you must do us the honor to come and see us."

The cashier of the theatre, of which Gaudissard resigned the directorship about a year ago, is still Mon-

sieur Topinard; but Monsieur Topinard has become gloomy, misanthropical, and taciturn. He is thought to have committed some crime, and the wits of the theatre declare that the change came after he married Lolotte. The name of Fraisier makes him start. Perhaps the reader may think it strange that the only being worthy of Pons should be found on the third floor of a boulevard theatre.

Madame Rémonencq, mindful of the prediction of Madame Fontaine, is unwilling to retire into the country; she still remains in her splendid shop on the boulevard de la Madeleine, once more a widow. The Auvergnat, having so arranged the marriage contract that the survivor should inherit the whole property, left a little glass of vitriol within reach of his wife, expecting an accident; and his wife having, with the best intentions, placed the little glass elsewhere, Rémonencq swallowed the poison. This end, worthy of such a villain, tells in favor of Providence, whom the painters of manners and morals are accused of forgetting, — possibly because the endings of so many dramas put Providence in the wrong.

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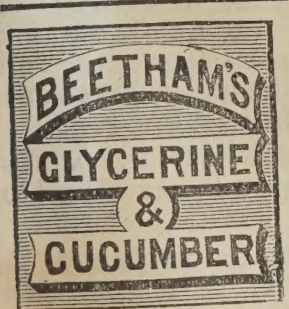

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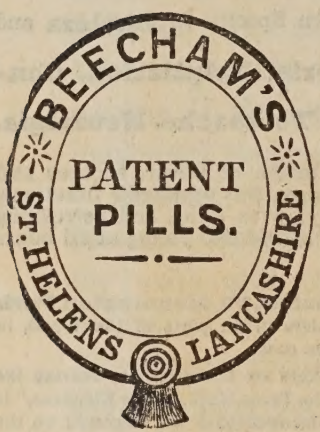

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